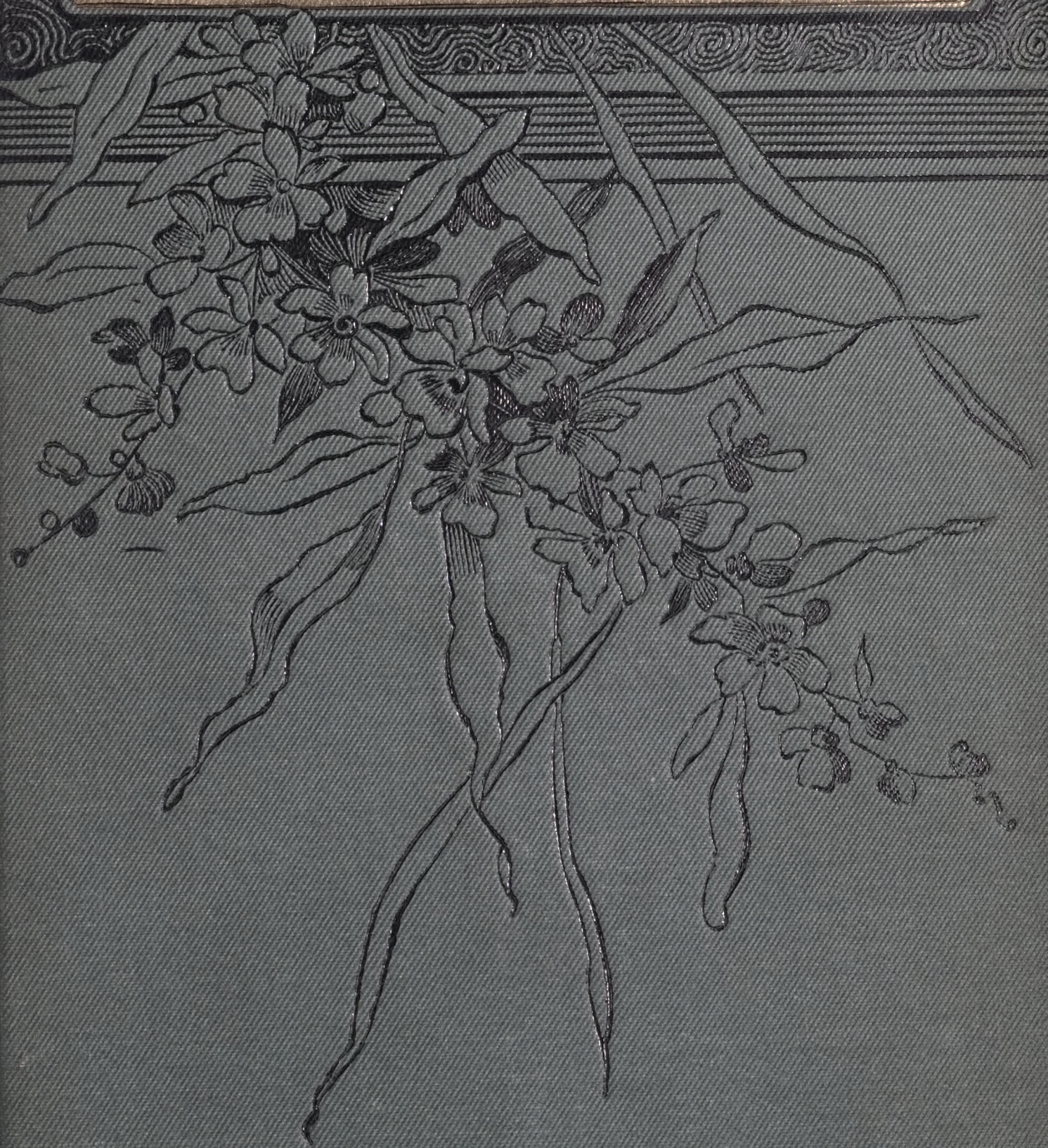
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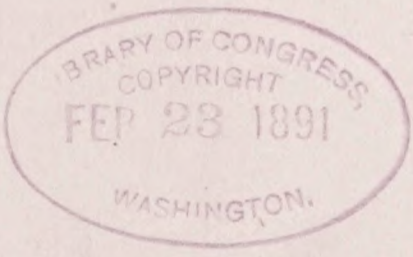
BY

JESSIE PATRICK FINDLAY,

AUTHOR OF 'THE LOST TIDE.'

'Nemesis will have her dues,
And all our struggles and our toils
Tighter wind the giant coils.'

—EMERSON.



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TO

My Mother.



American Edition.

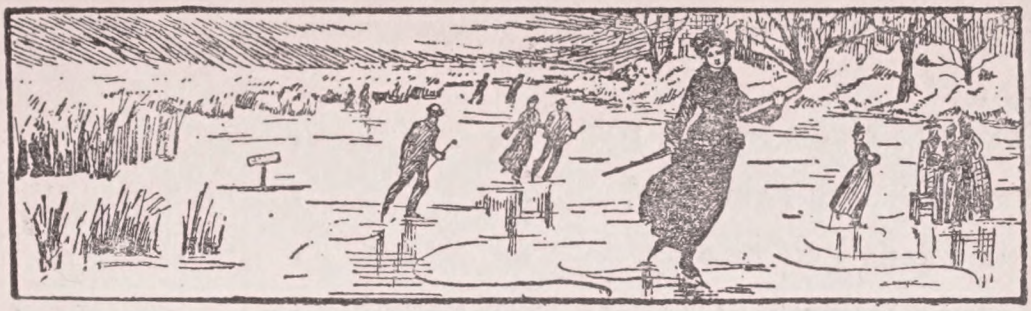
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CRANSTON & STOWE.





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NORMAN REID, M.A.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BECKONING FUTURE.

We call our sorrows Destiny, but ought
Rather to name our high successes so. LOWELL.

MY story opens on a crisp morning in February a few years ago.

The hard ground was as chill and silvery grey as hoar-frost could make it; the black and leafless trees looked nipped and rigid, as if resisting the extreme cold that threatened to freeze the rising sap within and to snap the tense branches and twigs, and thus save the crows much labour in their nest-building operations next month. The iron sky and the iron earth seemed to be drawing together as threateningly as the ever-contracting Iron Shroud of gruesome fame; and everybody with the slightest pretensions to the possession of a weather-eye felt safe in predicting a not far distant fall of snow.

Commend me to a morning like this for enhancing the charms of a certain cosy, fire-bright parlour in Melville Terrace, Edinburgh, where on each side of the radiant hearth stand capacious lounging-chairs, and where the breakfast-table displays various appetising dainties upon a cloth whose spotless white does not chill the very marrow, like the woolly fabric of snow which Dame Nature is weaving behind the sullen grey clouds visible from the window.

The sole occupant of this room was a young man, who would have been appropriately introduced, one would think, in an attitude of luxurious and slippered ease, either doing justice to the 'good things of this life' on the table or enjoying his morning paper while he toasted his toes in front of the blazing fire.

The Rev. Norman Reid, M.A., however, was not thus engaged. He was standing by the window with his hands in his pockets, gazing with evident impatience through the scanty fringe of trees that bordered the frosty expanse of the Meadows. He had just breakfasted, and the morning paper invited him to a cosy nook by the fire; nevertheless he lingered by the window with a pucker of anxiety on his brow, awaiting the arrival of his letters—or to speak more correctly, hoping for the arrival of one special letter.

Let us glance at him while Destiny—in the shape of the limping, blue-cold postman, sowing his paper harvest of joys and sorrows as he moves along—is rapidly approaching.

He is of an unusually tall and massive figure, the possession of which one would almost grudge to a minister

whose sacred calling is not supposed to necessitate particularly herculean proportions, were it not for the correspondingly massive head and face, plainly indicative of an intellectual and spiritual endowment absolutely essential to one whose business it is to interest and influence men.

The face is grave and strong for one so young. It is full of dormant power, but also alive with the sensitive lights and shadows of emotion. There is sympathy in it and sober self-restraint, with more than a hint of firm determination. The whole personality, indeed, is that of one who will probably prove a mighty power either for good or ill. Which of those opposing powers, O swift-advancing Destiny, will turn the scales that Fortune with bandaged eyes poises in her unseen hand?

His clustering yellow hair shades a broad, projecting forehead which makes a somewhat stern retreat for his prominent and eager grey eyes, and his nose is of that delicate aquiline type in which the nostrils seem to quiver with every passing breath of emotion. The lower part of his face, however, lacks the spiritual significance hinted in brow and eyes. It is very decidedly aggressive; and the wide, full-lipped mouth, half-hidden by a moustache of golden brown, is quite in keeping with the stubborn curves of the clean-shaven chin.

About two years before the story opens he had finished a distinguished curriculum at the University and the New College of Edinburgh, and since then he had been diligently acquiring experience to fit him for his life-work by acting as missionary-assistant to a zealous city minister.

He had lately received an invitation to preach as a candidate for the vacant charge of Free St. John's, Otterton—an important manufacturing town near the West Coast of Scotland. The congregation was one of the largest and most influential in that quarter of the country, and the Rev. Norman Reid, who had the modesty of real ability, wondered not a little why an unordained and comparatively friendless preacher like himself should have been thought of in connection with a charge so far distant from Edinburgh and so justly considered a prize in the ministerial world.

He had gone to Otterton to preach, and while there he learned from a gentleman who had with somewhat masterful kindness taken possession of him as his guest, a Mr. Morgan, a large employer of labour in the town and the leading elder in Free St. John's, that it was to him mainly he owed the invitation that had puzzled him. Mr. Morgan, as it turned out, had chanced to hear him preach in a church in Glasgow two or three months previously, and had been so much attracted by his appearance and impressed by his ability and spirituality—as he told him with slightly condescending frankness—that he had there and then determined, if a vacancy should occur in Free St. John's,—a not unlikely contingency owing to the serious illness of the then pastor,—to exert whatever influence he possessed to secure him as the next minister of the congregation.

The young preacher was also informed by the same suave authority that he had made a most favourable impression on the minds of the people, and that he might

in a week or two expect to hear the result of the election, which would take place at the beginning of February.

It was now the fourth day of that month, and hence Mr. Reid's anxious outlook for the postman. He had just turned round with a shiver, half the effect of the intense cold, half the nervous outcome of hope deferred, and had walked to the far end of the room, when the postman's shrill whistle and sharp pull at the bell were heard, and a minute or two later Katie Lawson, his housekeeper, entered, bearing on a salver a letter with the Otterton post-mark on the corner of the envelope.

He came forward and snatched at it eagerly, while Katie stood observing his anxiety with a smile.

'I'm thinkin' there's guid news in that letter. Folk wad surely no' send such a lang screed to ane they wanted to hae nae mair ado wi',' said she shrewdly as he turned over to the second page. But the young man was too much engrossed to hear her, so she began to busy herself about the room, waiting, with the familiarity of an old and privileged servant, to hear the news which the letter contained. Mrs. Lawson, however, deserves a special word of description not only on account of her personal qualities but because of the prominent part she is to play in this most veracious chronicle.

She was a little and spare woman of about fifty years of age; and, although her face had the wrinkled bloom of a late apple, her sandy hair and colourless eyes gave her, it was difficult to tell how, the look of a highly-intelligent ferret. Her bunchy wincey skirts, just revealing her

trimly-shod feet, combined with her quaint coif of muslin, and bibbed apron of the same daintily-clean material, to give her a neat and old-fashioned air which never failed to win admiring attention. I don't think, however, that Katie had chosen her unique attire with an eye to anything so frivolous as the picturesque, for she was a frugal soul and was 'wearing out,' I suspect, the personal plenishing of an equally frugal but long-deceased grandmother.

Norman had never known the love and care of a father, and although, through the death of a wealthy relative whose existence had only become known to his mother by means of an advertisement asking for information regarding herself, she had about twelve years before this fallen heir to a small fortune, Mrs. Reid had had a long and severe struggle to educate her only child; and after the need for the economy and toil of earlier years had departed her health had given way, and for the last few years she had spent the winter and spring in Mentone, where she at present was.

Katie had been in that lady's service since before Norman's birth, and both mother and son owed much to her unwearying devotion. She was consequently regarded rather as a friend than a mere dependant, and was a sharer in all the joys and sorrows of the little household.

'It's all right, Katie; I've been unanimously elected!' cried Norman, looking up from the letter with a glad light in his face.

'Eh, that's grand news! I hope it may be for your

guid,' said she brightly. 'No' that ye need to be telt that God's glory comes before the guid o' men! Eh, but your mother will be a prood woman when she hears the news!'

'Yes; I must write to her at once, so I'll give you all the particulars afterwards, Katie,' replied Norman, sitting down to his desk with a happy face, while Katie removed the breakfast-tray and retired to her own domain.

After his letter was finished Norman rose and prepared for an encounter with the keen north wind, which was beginning to bluster across the Meadows and to break up the uniform grey of the sky into toppling crags of flying vapour. The silver mist of the hoar-frost had disappeared beneath the advancing steps of noon, and as Norman walked rapidly over the grass towards Lauriston Place, where dwelt one who had also an interest in his future prospects, the 'ineffectual sun' blinked for a moment between two flying rifts of cloud and he took it for an omen of good import, for, stalwart giant though he was, at that moment his heart was fluttering like any woman's with mingled emotions of love and hope and fear.

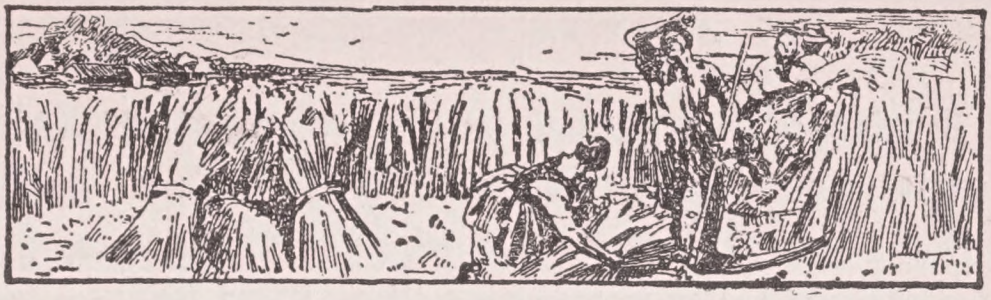
For the mainspring of his happiness was nothing more substantial than the capricious smile on a girl's face, and his hopes fluctuated according to the variable sunshine and shadow visible thereon.

Sometimes, indeed, he had allowed himself to be momentarily beguiled by the sweet, vague dreams of love from the thought of practical success in his sacred

calling and even from a consideration of its more spiritual aspects.

To-day, however, his thoughts of work and love were harmoniously blended, for the intelligence of his election to a more independent and important sphere of labour than he had hitherto occupied had come to give a quickened purpose to his love; and it was with this purpose beating high in his bosom that he at length found himself in front of the house wherein dwelt the lady of his love.





CHAPTER II.

LOVE AND ART.

> Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
> Too calm and sad a face in front of thine:
> For we two look two ways.
>
> E. B. Browning.

NORMAN entered a lofty stone passage and, after ascending two flights of stairs, he paused on the narrow landing and knocked at a door whereon a shining plate of brass, which was all that emerged from the gloom, set forth the name of Allan Porteous, drawing-master.

The door was opened by a young girl whose slight figure was clad in a shabby gown of grey, over which she wore a painting-blouse of brown linen, picturesquely brightened by touches of blue. On the thumb of her left hand she bore a palette, and her right was stretched forth to Norman in eager welcome.

'Ah, Norman, I knew your knock!' she said brightly. 'How dare you come and steal my morning light?'

They entered the studio as she spoke, and, while Norman found room for his hat amid the miscellaneous articles that littered the table, she laid aside her palette

and brushes with a scarcely audible sigh. But Norman heard it, and said somewhat sharply,—

'Don't let me disturb you, Clara. Go on, pray; you can work and talk at the same time, I suppose.'

'That is exactly what I cannot do, you silly boy,' she said, sitting down beside him on the rickety couch that adorned the studio; 'especially when I see such burning impatience in your face. Come, what news from Otterton?'

Norman drew her closer and, putting his arm round her slender waist, said, 'The best of news. I have been unanimously elected to Free St. John's; and now, my darling, I can offer you a home. We can be married very soon now.'

She abruptly withdrew herself from his embrace and, rising, moved over to the window and stood in the shadowy recess. Norman also rose hastily and stood in a pained silence which, being at all times uncertain of Clara's moods, he feared to break. But his face showed his bitter disappointment, for in the first flush of his bright future prospects he had fully counted upon the warm sympathy of his betrothed.

The truth was that Clara Porteous had given her lover only a divided love. He had won her consent to become his wife in spite of her almost passionate protestations that she did not, and never could, love him as she did her art. She was an enthusiastic artist, the only child of a clever Bohemian drawing-master who sacrificed everything, his daughter's talent included, to his unscrupulous appetite for drink. He succeeded in wrenching a precarious livelihood from a constantly-changing class of

pupils and from the sale of the promising sketches produced by Clara's indefatigable brush—at a cost to her of which he in his selfishness never dreamed.

She never complained, she never told her callous father that his conduct checked her dearest aspirations, and that his insatiable demands hindered her from doing justice to that genius whose restless clamouring for worthy expression made her life at once a glory and a martyrdom.

Ah, how often had she wept in secret over those daily disillusions that clouded her sensitive soul,—the harsh reproofs, the never-ending worries about money, the sordid atmosphere enveloping her life, that would fain have breathed a nobler air!

All these were burdens lying heavily upon her youthful shoulders, and, although to one of a practical or easy temperament their power to annoy would have been but slight, for her they were omnipotent to darken the days and to scatter into elusive fragments the rainbow-like inspirations and the haunting dreams of fame that came to cheer her in the silent night.

The struggle against circumstance was visible in the pale, pinched face wherein her dark eyes shone with unnatural lustre, in the harsh lines of care that looked so incongruous upon the girlish brow—for she was but twenty years old—and in the pathetic and almost habitual droop of her graceful shoulders.

'Have you nothing to say, Clara?' asked Norman at length.

'I am very glad that you have been successful. I am

pleased for your sake, Norman; and your mother too will be pleased,' she rejoined in a low voice.

'Is that all you have to say? Oh, Clara, how disappointing you are! What is it all worth to me if *you* will not share it?'

'Norman,' she said, turning vehemently towards him, 'I wish that you would go away and begin your new life—and forget me. Oh, I wish that you would forget me! I see more clearly every day that I ought never to have owned that I loved you.'

He tossed his head impatiently, and his voice was stern as he replied, 'Must we fight that old battle over again? How often have I assured you that you obeyed your truest instinct when you owned your love? You *will* persist in tormenting yourself and me, but oh, my darling, I will never give you up! I will never allow you to wrong your woman's heart for the sake of a romantic dream of fame.'

'Do you call my longing after perfection in my art a dream?' said Clara in a hurt tone, while her eyes filled with tears. 'It is my life-work,' she protested;—'of that I am sure. Why should I thus struggle against love if it were not so?'

'You are too much alone, Clara—you brood over that canvas,' said Norman, pointing to a picture standing on the easel, 'until you grow morbid and visionary.'

Clara shook her head.

'No,' she said sadly; 'I am happiest at my work, and that is what troubles me, Norman, when I think of my promise to you. I cannot reconcile love

and art. I wish I could, for I love you dearly, although'—

'I will never let you go as long as you say you love me!' cried Norman, going towards her and kissing her with passionate tenderness. 'You shall not sacrifice your truest—your womanly—vocation for a girl's romantic dream of fame, I repeat!'

'Ah, do not say that you think I shall fail in my art!' cried Clara wistfully. 'I thought that you believed in me. It will be very dreary for me if I have not your faith in me to sustain me!'

'You sweet, inconsistent darling!' said Norman with a smile; 'if you are sure of success, what does it matter whether your poor discarded lover believes in you or not? But I *do* believe in you. I believe that you have got a distinct gift, but I understand you better than you do yourself, Clara, and I know that even fame would be powerless to bring happiness to you if you thus renounce love. What pleasure can fame bring to a lonely heart? Believe me, dearest, the sweetest drop in the cup of earthly success is the recognition and proud, fond praise of those who are nearest and dearest.'

'It may be so, Norman, but I do not seem to have room in my heart for both love and art.' She spoke almost deprecatingly, and he wondered for a moment if she was really as cold as she seemed; but, remembering other scenes in which love had proved the conqueror, he made yet another appeal.

'If you will be my wife, Clara, I will give you all that you desire—leisure to pursue your art'—

She interrupted him hastily.

'Do not tempt me, Norman! You know very well that a minister's wife ought to have no vocation that might distract her from the duties of her position; and art is no dilettante fad that can be taken up or flung aside at a moment's notice. It is a life-long toil, but it is the grandest thing on earth!' she cried with an almost frantic enthusiasm in her dark eyes; 'and I cannot relegate to any secondary position this God-given gift of mine. Ah, Norman, do you think that my lonely childhood has been filled with dreams, my sorrowful youth with aspirations after art for nought?'

'Do you then consider my love *nought?*' said he bitterly as he paced up and down the floor. 'You do not think of *my* suffering, Clara. How can you condemn me to stand aside and watch you struggling against such fearful odds, and yet stretch forth no hand to help you? Oh, my darling, strong men have failed, as you will'—

'Norman, do not say it!' she cried passionately. 'I *shall* succeed if I live.'

'Ay, there it is! If you *live!* Clara, Clara, how am I to endure the bitter knowledge that you actually lack sufficient daily bread, while I have enough and to spare?'

She held up a deprecating hand with a sob which went to his heart.

'Oh, my darling, you know that I speak the truth! Why—why will you persist in following a career in which even strong men faint by the way?'

'I am driven toward it. It is my fate,' said she simply.

'If I die, there is an end of it; but I shall not die—I have hope!' she cried with a new light in her eyes.

'No one can live on hope,' said he sadly. 'Will hope buy you bread, or even the materials for your art? Oh, darling, come to me! I will shield you from every wind that blows.'

She shivered as the yearning tones of his voice thrilled her heart, but she shook her head as she again said, 'Norman, do not urge me. I dare not cherish your love —not alone because of my art. There is my father'— She paused with a blush of shame.

'Your father!' cried Norman scornfully; 'he is not worth the name! Will you actually sacrifice your happiness and mine for the sake of a—a scoundrel?'

This was a strong epithet to use in connection with the father of the girl he loved. She fronted him, straight and indignant, with a cry of horror upon her lips.

'You forget yourself strangely,' she said. 'Whatever he is, you have no right to call him *that* to me. My mother left him to my care on her death-bed.'

'That was reversing the natural state of the relationship,' retorted Norman angrily; 'and your mother never dreamed that he would become—what he is. If she had foreseen it, she would not have so hampered you.'

'Hush, hush! I know he is bad, but for my mother's sake he is a sacred charge to me. Therefore, Norman, I will not bring disgrace upon you by marrying you.'

Norman moved about impatiently.

'Where is he to-day?' said he suddenly. Clara did

not answer him; she merely stood looking down with a burning face.

'Is he drinking again?' cried Norman indignantly. 'Clara, Clara, this is no home for you!'

'This is the only home for me,' she said with pathos; 'but it humiliates me to see *you* here. Norman, do not grieve for me. Go away; forget me'—

'For God's sake do not mock me!' he cried desperately. 'Am I likely to forget you? But I will go away just now. I shall be in Edinburgh for some weeks yet; I will see you again before I leave for Otterton. But oh, Clara! think again before you fling love aside for such a barren life as this!' He waved his hand through the studio; then snatching his hat, he rushed away, too grieved to observe the usual courtesies of leave-taking.



CHAPTER III.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

O that men should put an enemy in their mouths, to steal away their brains! *Othello.*

LONG after the last echoes of Norman's steps had died away, Clara sat motionless and pondering in a chair by the window.

She truly loved him, and sometimes the longing for the affection and sympathy which would be hers if she became his wife threatened to conquer the strong purpose that dominated her inner life. She detested the slipshod existence to which she was condemned, for her instincts were thoroughly womanly and dainty, and all that was best in her was at war with her sordid environment.

And now, in the seclusion of the studio—an austerely bare place it was in spite of many feminine contrivances to make it comfortable — she owned to herself how pleasant life would be, surrounded with love and ease and beautified by the luxurious colours and costly bric-a-brac in which her artistic soul delighted. Yes; in spite of her passionate protestations of attachment to the art that

was to bring her fame, she might probably have swerved in her purpose but for the dead-weight of her vicious father which hung upon her, effectually preventing the monotonous pendulum of life from swaying aside. But for *that* she might have yielded to her lover's pleading and have made an attempt to live the dual life of wife and artist.

She moved uneasily in her chair as her quick imagination summoned the figure of her father before her—selfish, disreputable, hopelessly shabby—and she acknowledged with a sigh that the sweet lot of wifehood could never be hers as long as her father lived; then with a start once more she returned to her old allegiance, and she vowed a hundred times that for art she would live and die.

At last the sound of stumbling footsteps ascending the stair—oh, so different from the manly tread of her lover!—warned her of her father's approach. She rose and, opening the studio door, stood waiting to admit him. He entered, and, pushing past his daughter with a lurch in his drunken gait, halted in the middle of the floor, blinking foolishly at the pale sunlight that hurt his bleared and heavy eyes and accentuated with pitiless severity every point of degradation in his once handsome physique.

His dress was negligent and shabby, his grey hair lay in unkempt masses about his sodden temples which still retained faint traces of intellectual power, and his eyes were like his daughter's—soft, large, and brown—but how different was the soul that looked through these brown orbs of father and daughter!

He looked as if the divine soul given to every man at his birth had forsaken its unlovely dwelling-place, leaving it to the baleful occupancy of an evil spirit; while she stood gazing at him, her eyes preternaturally large with unshed tears and expressive of such mingled shrinking and pity that her father might well have taken them for those of an accusing angel.

'Don't stand staring there!' he cried angrily. 'How often must I tell you, Clara, that you admit too much sunshine into the studio? What on earth is to be gained by working in such a crude light? But of course you know better than your father, whose only aim in life is to form your style and find buyers for your pictures.'

Clara moved aside with a sigh. Too well she knew where most of the money thus obtained went.

Her father continued to talk in tremulous and peevish tones, and she saw that his nerves were quite unstrung by his drinking bout. She sat down patiently, knowing from experience that he must be allowed to have his say, but wishing—ah, how intensely!—that the ordeal was over.

'A pretty lot of snubbing I have had to endure from that fellow Richardson,' he complained. 'The cad positively refuses to give me another shilling until I bring him something more attractive to buyers than those paltry daubs of children and fruit. He says they just lie about his premises—nobody will buy them. You'll ruin yourself, Clara, if you repeat yourself in such trivial work; if you want to get on, you must really go in for something important.'

Clara half started from her seat and glanced with a look of dismay towards the easel whereon still stood her unfinished picture. She had forgotten to hide it—as she had done hitherto—from the eyes of her rapacious father.

Her glance was not lost upon him. He staggered towards the picture, peering at it with a cunning leer, while Clara, advancing, stood behind him with a beating heart.

'Hullo! Is this your work?' he exclaimed. 'By Jove, there's more in you than I thought! Won't we live in clover by-and-bye! And ah, you ungrateful girl, you would hide your work from your father! Isn't it *my* gift that you have inherited?' He began to weep maudlin tears, and who can tell in what well-nigh dry springs of fatherly pride and artistic ambition those tears had their far-away source? 'You might have told me, Clara;—it is wonderfully promising for one so young. But, if you had asked me, I could have given you a few valuable hints in the management of your composition;—no artist of any experience would have placed a strong shadow there,' he said, pointing with critical though shaky finger to Clara's canvas.

She was greatly touched by her father's artistic appreciation, and her thoughts went back to a not very distant time before drink had so completely demoralised him,—a time when a word of praise from his lips would have brightened the day for her. But now his unstable mood changed as he reflected on his grievance.

'Why did you keep back this picture?' he asked with returning anger. 'The idea of allowing your poor old father to go hawking about with your studies of wretched

children among the dealers when you had this in the studio! It's almost finished, and you must have spent months on it. I see the reason now why I have been kept on such short commons. Didn't I educate you and give you a course of art-training that you might keep me in my old age? However, this picture will sell for something worth while. It is too late now for you to send it to the R. S. A. this year—more's the pity; but get it finished as soon as you can, and I will get as much as possible for it.'

Clara impulsively stepped towards the easel, and, lifting the painting, set it on the floor with its face to the wall. Then she turned to her father and stood like a lioness at bay; and, although her face was white and her hands trembled almost as violently as his, he cowered before her.

'You know very well that I have no intention of exhibiting in the R. S. A. for some years to come. I would not get admission,' she said with a scornful laugh. 'This picture is not for any exhibition. It is a commission.'

'A commission—and you never told me! You work on the sly, do you?' said he with a sneer.

'Your conduct compels me to do so. How otherwise do you suppose that I can get decent clothes?' she inquired bitterly. 'But we must clearly understand each other here. This picture is my property, and if you dare to take it out of the studio, I will never—no, never—touch a brush again. You will starve then, you know; and I will rather burn this picture unfinished than run the risk of its being bartered for drink. You oblige me to speak

plainly. I will leave you unless you promise. But what are your promises worth?' she cried with a gesture of despair as her father commenced to pour out profuse promises, too glib to be reliable. As he went maundering on, poor Clara began to have a dim presage that fame might after all prove to be mere apples of Sodom.

'I only desire your advancement in life,' he said, 'but I expect nothing for all my efforts to bring you into notice but ingratitude. Lear's daughters were nothing to *you*. By the way, I saw that high and mighty lover of yours lurking about the street as I came along. The fellow actually seemed to be watching *me!* But he shuffled off quickly enough when I made tracks towards him. Confound his white choker! perhaps he thought he saw a request for half-a-crown in my face.'

'Oh, father, were you really going to ask him for money?'

'Yes—why not? He'll soon be a relation, I suppose. What's the use of a son-in-law except to borrow from?'

'You must not attempt it. It would kill me!' cried Clara with agonised blushes burning on her face. 'Surely you will not humiliate me so!'

'Hoity toity! Don't be so dramatic. Things have come to a pretty pass when a chit of a girl tells her father what he must or must not do. Where would be the harm of asking a few shillings from him?'

'You must not! Father, if you will promise me not to ask money from Mr. Reid, I will paint you another picture—a good one.'

She despised herself as she thus compromised with her

father, for she knew that by supplying him with the means of obtaining drink she but strengthened the craving whose indulgence was dragging him to perdition. Still, she foresaw nothing but humiliation and sorrow if her father put his threat of asking money from Norman into execution.

'I'll tell you what,' said he; 'I'll promise, if you give me that picture you are working at. Give it to me just now, and you can begin another at once.'

'Have I not told you that it is a commission? It must be sent home by the 26th,' she said with sharp pain in her voice. 'I will paint you another—no, I will not! I am doing wrong to give you the means of obtaining drink. I tell you plainly, father, that if you ask money from Norman I won't marry him, and I won't stay here!'

Her father was alarmed—he saw that he had gone too far.

'Come Clara,' he said, 'you are not in earnest? Do you mean to say that you will throw over Norman if I borrow from him? Why'—

'Yes, I mean it. I will die rather than marry him if you humiliate me so!' she cried vehemently. 'You shall not bring disgrace upon him. You are a bad man! I *will* say it, although you are my father; but, remember, you can stretch my endurance only to a certain limit. Beware of going beyond it, for I will leave you then to your own resources. Oh, do you not see how you are ruining my chances in my profession — how you are ruining yourself and making my life an intolerable burden to me?'

She stopped with a sob. What was the use of ex-

postulating with one who was the bond-slave of drink? As for her father, he had recourse to his usual weak device—he burst into maudlin tears and said, 'Clara, my little girl, surely you won't leave your old father lonely? Remember your promise to your sainted mother!'

'I will remember that promise only so far as I can keep it with justice to others. My mother never dreamed that you would sink so low, or she would not have imposed such a burden upon me,' she replied sternly. 'If you want anything to eat, go up-stairs and I will lock the studio door.'

He followed her without a word, but his crafty eyes pursued her movements with a cunning which was observed by Clara, who lifted her precious picture, and for better security carried it with her to her own chamber.





CHAPTER IV.

THE RULING ELDER.

All things pass. They leave their traces
On the soul's undying life,
Not upon our eager faces,
Lined with a grosser strife. J. P. F.

A FEW days before that appointed for Norman's ordination, Katie Lawson, his housekeeper, might have been seen standing on the broad white steps leading from the gravelled sweep to the main door of Free St. John's Manse at Otterton.

It was about five o'clock on an afternoon in the beginning of March, and the budding poplar trees that were visible above the wall sheltering the Manse garden from the gaze of passers-by were in that dreary stage of arrested development which is the inevitable effect of the bitter east winds that scourge the departing winter. Katie, who could see over the wall from her vantage-ground, peered between the straight poplar boughs towards the highway that passed the Manse gates, but she saw nothing save a blinding cloud of stinging March dust sweeping past before the gusty wind, and she watched it as it came rushing from the town lying in the near

distance—a smoky confusion of factory stalks and grimy buildings of all sorts and sizes, pierced here and there by a tapering church-spire of dingy red sandstone climbing up into the grey sky, through which meandered a huge and murky serpent of smoke coiling forth from the many tall chimneys of its busy hives of industry.

Katie, who had a highly dramatic habit of speaking aloud when alone, proceeded to give voice to her opinion of her future dwelling-place.

'The Manse is weel awa' frae the town. I'm glad it lies so bonnily to the water-side, and it's a verra guid thing, for Otterton is no' a great toon to live in, judgin' by present appearances. What wi' stour and smoke, I'm glad the mistress is no' comin' jist yet. We'll get a' the reek that's gaun, I'm thinkin', on the washin' days, when the wind is in the south,' said she, casting a prophetic glance into the future. Then she yawned wearily, for, what with cleaning the rooms and planning the arrangement and bestowal of the furniture which had arrived in vans in the early morning, it had been an unusually busy and anxious day for her, and now she longed for that womanly panacea for all ills—a cup of tea.

She had been invited by Adam Auld, the minister's man, to drink tea at his cottage, which stood by the highway and was just visible from the Manse; so she locked the door and was in the act of descending the steps when her departure was arrested by the appearance of two gentlemen entering the gate and proceeding in a leisurely manner along the gravelled walk towards the

house. Evidently they were in no hurry, and apparently they did not notice Katie standing impatiently on the steps, for they were absorbed in talk, although, as Katie was quick to observe, the elder of the two took the leading part in the conversation, pausing on the path now and then to accentuate his remarks by a condescending touch of his hand upon the shoulder of his companion, whose contribution to the dialogue consisted mainly of smiles and nods of acquiescence.

'Set them up!' quoth Katie impatiently. 'What do they want here? Ye wad think the place belanged to them. — Powers aboon!' she suddenly ejaculated with a start; 'they're as like ane anither as twa peas! —but only to them that kens, thank the Lord!' she added slowly.

Now, whom could Katie mean?—for the gentlemen approaching were of totally different exterior; one of them, in fact, was evidently inferior in position to the other. The elder and obviously the chief personage was tall, rosy, and grey-haired, while his companion, besides being little and dark, had neither the self-complacent expression of countenance nor the sleek and consequential physical development of the other.

Katie had time to recover her usual repose of manner before they reached her, but she could not repress an eager and curious stare which seemed to flatter the *amour propre* of the tall, stout gentleman, who held out his plump and ringed hand for the keys dangling on Katie's finger.

'You may give me the keys, my good woman,' said he with a florid smile which aggravated Katie. 'You are our young minister's housekeeper, I presume. I am his neighbour and an elder in Free St. John's. We have come to see that all is in proper order within the Manse; and I humbly trust,' said he — anything but humbly in Katie's estimation—'that, by the grace of God, Mr. Reid and I will ingather many precious fruits of the coming ministry in this corner of the Lord's vineyard.'

Katie delivered the keys into his plump, outstretched hand through the sheer compulsion of amazement, while the elder's companion said suavely, 'With a chosen vessel such as you to guide and uphold the ministry, we may confidently expect boundless blessing from above, Mr. Morgan.'

'Morgan—that's the name!' ejaculated Katie, as she watched the smiling elder followed by his obsequious attendant disappear within the Manse door. 'It's him sure enough! Eh, but the ways o' the Lord are past findin' oot! To think o' seein' him *here!* What will the mistress say? An' he's a chosen vessel noo!' Katie began to laugh softly. '*Him* wi' his "grace o' God," an' his "fruits o' the ministry"!'

Thus Katie's monologue murmured on until she reached the gate of the garden wherein Adam Auld awaited her, leaning on his spade the while and watched at a respectful distance by a bright-eyed robin in quest of worms.

Adam was a little wizened-looking man who acted

in the double capacity of minister's man and jobbing gardener. His face was shrewd and much furrowed, and his brow was full of curious knotty hollows that looked like—and probably were—the graves of many ancient memories. His lips, thin and long, modestly retired into the ample cavern of his mouth, as if shrinking from public view, and his toilworn hands were crooked and claw-like through long wielding of the spade, and possibly, too, because of an over-abundance of rheumatic acidity in their gnarled joints. His face did not as a rule wear a very pleasant expression, and his frosty blue eyes looked out on his fellow-men somewhat cynically; but any one who desired to see Adam at his best must needs follow him—as Katie was doing—along the mossy garden walk towards the cottage, where Mysie, his blind niece, kept house for him.

In spite of the retarding east winds, a gay fringe of golden crocuses bordered each side of the narrow path, and the ancient apple-trees had tiny bud-sheaths upon every lichened bough, while the severely-pruned gooseberry bushes were tipped with innumerable pink dots that promised well for the coming harvest of fruit.

'It's a stoory day,' said Adam, by way of opening the conversation, as he walked by Katie's side, wriggling himself the while into an ancient coat which through much exposure to wind and weather, had come to have a kind of resemblance to green and russet Nature.

'Ay, it is,' said she; 'but they say that "a peck o'

March dust is worth a king's ransom." I've gien the Manse keys to a masterfu' gentleman ca'd Morgan wha seems to be quite at hame here. You'll ken him, of course, Mr. Auld?' Katie could not keep a spice of resentment out of her voice, and Adam looked at her with a cynical smile.

'Oh ay, I ken him,' said he. 'He's the owner o' the big foondry ower there by the Waterside; and he's oor ruling elder; a stoop o' the kirk, my woman — a stoop o'. the kirk and a whited sep— Ahem! Come in by, Mrs. Lawson, and dinna tempt me to speak evil o' dignitaries,' said Adam significantly; and Katie was silent, although a host of questions trembled on her tongue and her thoughts went far into the past.

She followed the old man into a large and comfortable kitchen, ruddy with the welcome glow of the dancing fire; and she noticed with a well-pleased smile that a table in the middle of the floor was covered with a daintily pure tablecloth, hospitably spread with all the requisites for a luxurious tea.

Against the light from the window, which looked into the garden, stood a young girl whose face Katie could not make out in the dusk; but her attention was at once arrested by a quiet womanly figure standing leaning with one hand on the tea-table, and looking in her own face—so she thought—with a very intent gaze. Adam led her up to Katie and said, 'Mysie, my lass, this is Mrs. Lawson come at last,

and a lang and busy day she's had o't. See that ye gie her a guid cup o' tea.'

Mysie took Katie's hand with a smile.

'I'll dae that,' said she. 'Come into the big chair, Mrs. Lawson—the nichts are cauld yet.'

'I'll awa', Mysie,' said the other young girl, advancing from the window abruptly. 'I'll tell you the lave again.'

'Oh, you're there, Jessie!' exclaimed Adam, who had taken the other arm-chair. 'This is anither niece o' mine, Mrs. Lawson, and a rael royd lassie she is. Stay and tak' a cup o' tea wi' us, if you're no' wanted at hame,' he added hospitably.

'She's wanted at hame, uncle; she'll no' stay the nicht,' interposed Mysie. 'Come the morn, Jessie; and see that ye gang stracht hame.'

Jessie tossed her head as she wrapped herself in a plaid. 'Uncle,' she said, going across the floor and opening the door, 'see that ye leave Mrs. Lawson to fin' oot oor family failin's hersel'. Dinna tell her a' oor fauts in ae nicht;'—and she was gone, slamming the door behind her with a force that made the tea-things jingle.

'Oh, that awfu' lassie!' said Adam as he placed a chair for Katie at the table and took his seat opposite; 'she's aye daein' and sayin' things she shouldna.'

'And she's weel telt o't too,' said Mysie, deftly pouring out the tea. 'She's ower weel telt o't indeed. The lassie says she's sick o' gettin' advice from everybody.'

'And yet I'll wager she cam' to *ye* for mair!' said

Adam with a cynical smile. 'Is your tea to your mind, Mrs. Lawson?'

'Ay is it!' said Katie emphatically. 'It's as fine a cup o' tea as ever I tasted, and your oat-cakes beat a'!' She pointed to a thin 'farl' of oatmeal cake as she spoke. 'Do you mak' them yoursel'?'

'Na; that's Jessie's wark. She's a clever lass wi' her hands. I used to bake—but no' noo.'

'Ye wadna think my Mysie was blind?' said Adam with a pathetic smile that transformed his rugged face.

'Blind!' cried Katie in amazement,—'wi' sic bonnie open een and handy ways! No, I wadna hae thocht it.'

'I wasna aye blind,' said Mysie simply. 'It's no' sae lang since I could see the sky, and the garden, and this bit hoosie too. And I ken fine hoo my uncle looks, although he's bound to be growin' a wee thocht aulder noo, for a' Jessie says that there's no' a grey hair in his heid yet.'

Katie stared, for Adam wore a wig of bushy red, but she wisely held her peace in response to an anxious nod and a wink from the old man.

'No,' said he, 'there's no' a grey hair in a' my heid; it's aye the same bonnie colour that ye mind sae weel. It's as red as ever, Mysie, my doo—jist like your ain, ye ken.'

'Yes; the same as my ain. Jim Borland likes it weel. He says it's like gold wi' a glint o' fire flichterin' i' the heart o't'—

'He's aye fu' o' high-soundin' nonsense,' interrupted Adam. 'We'll no' speak o' *him* the nicht. Will ye help Mrs. Lawson to anither cup o' tea?'

Katie had never all her life before been reduced to such prolonged silence. She looked with a sensation of awe at the blind girl's lovely face, so sad, so thoughtful, so youthful, for Mysie was but twenty-one; and in its pale glow she felt the influence of an indefinable charm — not the skin-deep charm of beauty, though Mysie possessed that too — but a nameless expression of gentle power as of one to whom the outer world had become of minor importance to the world within.

At this moment a knock was heard at the door, and Adam rose to open it.

'Ah, Adam! these are the Manse keys. I believe that Mr. Reid's housekeeper is with you,' said the strident voice of Mr. Morgan. 'Give her the keys, will you? Mysie well? Good-night;' and without waiting for his questions to be answered he walked rapidly away. Adam shut the door and returned to his chair.

'I houp ye heard him. He meant ye to dae't, at ony rate. A'thing Morgan does maun be telt frae the hoose-tap. There's the keys, Mrs. Lawson, but ye needna gang awa' into the empty Manse until bed-time, at ony rate. Sit doon a while and gie's your crack.'

'Yes,' said Mysie; 'draw your chair nearer the fire and I'll licht the gas. Are ye gaun hame the morn?'

'Ay, I maun be hame by efternune,' replied Katie, watching the blind girl as she put the tea-things aside, lighted the gas, and stirred the fire into a brighter blaze before she sat down beside her uncle.

'Does Mr. Morgan belang here awa'?' said Katie after a pause.

'No' exactly; but his father did,' said Adam, lighting his pipe. 'He was the owner o' Otterbank Foondry, and when he dee'd it fell to his only son—oor Mr. Morgan—wha was in foreign parts at the time, pushin' the trade; but he has lived here since ever his father dee'd. His mither is deid too, and so is his only sister. I could tell ye a story aboot *her*,' added Adam garrulously.

'Hoo lang will it be since the father dee'd?' said Katie, ignoring Adam's last words.

'No' that lang; a matter o' ten years or thereaboot.'

'And hoo lang wad this Mr. Morgan be abroad, ken ye?'

'Oh, let me see, noo — maybe thirteen or fourteen years,' answered Adam after a pause.

'Fourteen years,' said Katie to herself; 'that mak's my guess richt.' Aloud she said, 'He's verra wealthy, isna he, and verra liberal to the kirk, eh? The foondry 'll be a payin' concern?'

Adam looked curiously at Katie through a meditative cloud of smoke as he replied,—

'Ay; it's a payin' concern, sure enough. He's verra rich, but his wark-folk can tell ye that his kirk charities are screwed oot o' *their* pouches. There's a lot o' discontent i' the foondry, and gin times were brisker and hands no' sae easily got, there wad be a strike, I dinna doot, for mair wages; but Morgan wad be sure to haud oot till starvation point. He wad get his ain way i' the lang-run—he wadna mind smotherin' the bees efter he had grabbit the honey. Dae ye ken him?'

'Me! No. Hoo should I ken him?' said Katie with a start.

'Oh, I thocht maybe ye did. He's no' a guid ane,' said he, shaking his head slowly.

'Softly, uncle!' said Mysie's quiet voice. '"Judge not, that ye be not judged," ye ken.'

'That's a' verra weel, Mysie, but the honest truth maun oot; and I'm sure I wad rather be auld drucken Rab Reyburn greetin' wi' shame when the drink's no' in him than I wad be yon smooth-tongued, self-righteous Pharisee.'

'Is he a' that?' said Katie, athirst for information.

'Ay is he; and ye needna think to shut my mooth, Mysie, for ye ken weel that the Lord Hissel' couldna awa' wi' hypocrites,' said Adam.

'That's true enough, uncle, but *He* had clearer een than you can possibly have, ye ken; and ye maun mind that Mr. Morgan is an elder o' the kirk, and that Mrs. Lawson will think ye have unco little guid to tell o' him. Is Mr. Reid married, may I spier?' said Mysie, changing the subject.

'No; and I hope there's no inveiglin' hizzies in Otterton,' quoth Katie with a grim smile.

Mysie laughed. 'Are his father and mither alive?' she asked.

'His mither is; but she's a delicate cratur and has been awa' in the south o' France a' winter. They couldna spare *me* very sair,' said Katie proudly. 'And I hope that Norman—Mr. Reid, I mean—will be happy amang the kirk-folk here. Ye have gotten a guid minister and

a fine man, I can tell ye. There's no' mony like him, though I say it that shouldna.'

'We've heard a verra favourable report o' him,' said Adam. 'But he's fell young for sic a big chairge. It's to be houped that he'll do mair guid in this wicked toon than oor last minister. *He* was aboon his wark, bless ye! —unco ill to put up wi' and aye speakin' aboot uphaudin' the dignity o' the claith. Fegs, he was a' claith and naething but claith—a puir specimen o' a man!'

A whistle was heard as Adam spoke, and a quick step passed the window. Mysie rose, a sudden blush dyeing her pale cheeks, and the door was opened, admitting a gust of wind and rain. A young man stood in the doorway, surprised apparently at the presence of a stranger.

'Is it rainin'? Come in and shut the door, Jim,' said Adam, while Mysie brought forward a chair for the new-comer, who shook the rain off his cap and stood looking at Katie. 'This is Mrs. Lawson, oor new minister's hoosekeeper,' said Adam; 'and *this* is Jim Borland come to see Mysie as usual,' he added with a smile. 'You'll soon ken us a', Mrs. Lawson; Jim is Jessie's brither, ye maun ken.'

As the young man acknowledged Katie's salutation he approached the fire, and Katie, observing how wet his coat was, became suddenly seized with a desire to return to the Manse. She rose therefore, and proceeded to tie her bonnet-strings.

'I'll better be gaun,' she said; 'the Manse windows are open in a' this rain. It's high time I was awa'.

Na, na, Mr. Auld, you're no' to think o' gaun oot on my accoont; I can find the road brawly.' But Adam had already got his hat and plaid and stood waiting to accompany her after all the good-nights were said.

As the twain went out into the blustering night a chill drizzle of rain dashed into their faces, and Adam had to speak loudly so that his voice might reach Katie, struggling along under her umbrella.

'That's a godless fellow that's so chief wi' Mysie,' he said. 'They were sweethearts afore she turned blind, and the lad winna stay awa'. Does he think I wad gie my ae ewe lamb to *him?*—a scoffin' Radical fellow! The men at the foondry ca' him "Jim the Socialist."'

'But he canna think o' marryin' the lassie if she's blind!' cried Katie through the rain.

'That's jist exactly what he wants to dae!' said Adam. 'He's rael set upon her, but he winna get her. To speak truth, the lad hasna been weel guided; he has an awfu' father.—Lord! the rulin' elder's religion is naething to Bob Borland's. He's my brither-in-law—mair's the pity.'

'What objection can ye have to a man's religion, Mr. Auld?'

'I've nae objection to *religion;* it's the *man,* my woman. He's a perfect hee-haw o' a man wi' a mind as narrow as the rim o' a bawbee. He's aye bletherin' about election and hell-fire, but I'm geyan sure that *his* religion is naething but thrawnness and indigestion.'

'That's a puir accoont to gie o' your freend,' said Katie.

'He's an elder o' the kirk forbye,' nodded Adam, 'and

he's a worthy second to Morgan, wha has made him his foreman moulder i' the foondry for his ain ends—for deil kens he's but a second-rate workman. But he's Morgan's tool—the lion's provider, ye ken. Mind the dubs, Mrs. Lawson—it's really an awfu' rain!'

'It wad likely be him that cam' to the Manse wi' Morgan this efternune?' said Katie. 'A wee black body, aye cheepin' "yes" to a' the big man said?'

''Od, woman, that's him!' cried Adam delightedly. 'Losh, you and me'll get on fine thegither!—ye've a grand e'e for character. He's aye cheepin', as ye say;—his very boots gang cheepity-cheep doon the kirk passage on Sawbath. Eh, but he's a bit peewit o' a cratur!'

'And he's an elder too, is he?' said Katie, trudging on.

'Ay; but let me tell ye, my woman, Mr. Reid will soon fin' oot that the leaven o' his kirk is no' amang its elders and deacons by ony means. 'Od no! the leaven o' Free St. John's is a wheen puir auld wives and totterin' bodies wi' a lot o' trauchled mithers and a twa-three douce fellows that sit i' the back seats, alang wi' a sprinklin' o' young folk that keep the birr up. Morgan and his elect dinna ken *them*.'

'I'm thinkin' that Mr. Reid will hae his ain ado among ye a',' said Katie. 'I wish he may find it pleasant.'

'If he's a lad o' smeddum, there's nae fear; and—mind ye—it's a fine chairge for a' I hae said! The collections are big. It's my brither-in-law that looks efter the schemes o' the kirk. He's the money-bag o' the hale concern, and he thinks the cause o' the Lord's no' prosperin' unless the bawbees are reemin' ower the plate;—

no' but what a sma' collection speaks for itsel' on a rainy Sawbath,' concluded Adam sagely. 'Dinna let on to Mysie that I gae ye my candid opinion o' Borland. There's a rowth o' guid folk i' the kirk, ye ken.'

'It's to be hoped sae,' said Katie dryly. 'Oh, here's the Manse gate. Dinna come ony farther, Mr. Auld. Ye've been verra guid company.'

'Weel, guid-nicht. I think ye'll fin' your ain way noo,' said Adam as he turned back and plodded homeward through the rain.





CHAPTER V.

CLARA'S CHOICE.

Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
While the star o' hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me. BURNS.

ABOUT three weeks after his former visit Norman again sought Clara in the studio with the express intention of coming to a mutual understanding regarding the future. But when she appeared before him, smiling so wanly as she opened the door, his heart smote him, and he hesitated to broach the subject uppermost in his thoughts.

Her face—so pathetic in its small, pale oval—bore the traces of extreme mental exhaustion, for she had had a long morning's work at the easel; and, moreover, her father had once more wheedled and bullied her into painting a picture for him to take to the dealer, and the knowledge that she had weakly given in to him in spite of the voice of conscience, along with his peevish impatience while she laboured at the uncongenial task, acted like the prick of a goad upon her already overburdened brain.

'Won't you stop working for to-day, and walk with me,

Clara?' said Norman. 'Do put on your hat and leave this stifling studio.'

'I cannot; I have promised to finish this picture by to-morrow.'

'Is it another commission? Let me congratulate you!'

'No, it is not a commission,' answered Clara, who was uncompromisingly truthful in word and act. 'I promised my father'—

She broke off with a blush of shame, and Norman rose hastily and began to pace the floor. He paused in front of her after a moment and said gently,—

'Clara, let me speak seriously to you. You really ought not to give your father the means of procuring drink. If he had absolutely no money to spend, he would be forced to face the question of abstinence. By yielding to his demands you root his vice more firmly in his nature, and you prepare for yourself a future of remorse. Forgive me, dearest; indeed you err in this matter. Your father needs a stronger hand than yours to curb his depraved appetite for drink.'

'My conscience has been uneasy for some time,' she replied in a low voice. 'But if you only knew— I am sure that you are right, Norman. But what can I do?'

'You must look the difficulty straight in the face, Clara. Your father is rapidly going from bad to worse, and it is high time that stringent measures were adopted. It is a disease which must be treated like other diseases. I wish that you would give *me* the right to decide for you.'

She moved uneasily.

'Don't, Norman!' she said. 'Give me a little longer

to think over the matter. I know that I am acting in a very capricious way, and I wonder that you do not despise me for it. I promise to give you a definite answer on the night before you leave for Otterton.'

'Very well, my darling,' replied Norman. 'That will be about three weeks hence.'

'I know I am selfish, Norman; but indeed you would not harass me if you only knew how I am torn with conflict.'

'Harass you! Oh, my darling!' said he with sad surprise; 'I did not know that I was doing so; but when I see you looking so pale and sad, my heart leaps forth to shield you.'

'Oh, Norman, I am so weary of striving, and yet I cannot rest! Everything is changing, and I sometimes think that even my ideal is but a mean, self-seeking ambition after all.'

'Clara, believe me, love alone can satisfy the soul. Love—human first of all, leading ultimately to love divine; and I am convinced that for you above all women love is a necessity. But I will say no more.'

'No; let there be silence between us until— But, Norman, I wish—I wish that you would take the decision into your own hands and go away, forgetting'—

'Hush! that is impossible, my dearest,' said Norman, kissing her upturned face. 'We will say no more about it just now. I will go home and come again for my answer on the night before I leave Edinburgh.'

On the morrow the picture was duly finished and carried off by Clara's father in search of a purchaser.

She knew from bitter experience that he would not

return until the money was exhausted; so she sought to soothe her sad heart by steadily working at that other picture, whereon she was lavishing her utmost talent and which was already overdue. The days went swiftly past while she was thus engrossed, and it was only when the twilights came, compelling her to rest awhile, that she yielded to the conflict between love and art. She, as we have seen, had agreed with Norman that he should not come near the studio while her decision hung in the balance; but sometimes, when the loneliness pressed upon her and her heart beat loudly, thinking that she heard her father's stumbling feet on the stair, she wished that she had not so entirely denied herself Norman's kindly presence.

It was an unnatural life for a young girl to lead, and even Norman did not apprehend how poor and lonely she was. If he had known of those days of incessant toil and frequent fasting and those fear-laden nights, not all his scruples about interfering, nor even his promise to leave her to herself, would have deterred him from bearing his darling forth with righteous indignation and pity.

Her father returned about a week after his departure, ill in body and in mind as was to be expected. Clara—alas!—was accustomed to such crises in his drunken career. She procured the help of a neighbour in nursing him, and after the first mad delirium of illness had passed away he became more manageable, although she revolted almost as deeply against his moods of unstable penitence as she did against his active wickedness and insane fury.

She had lost faith in his sentimental protestations and abundant tears, for she suspected, poor girl, that his moral nature had become too perverted to be capable of true repentance, and she knew very well that with returning strength of body his fervid vows of amendment would evaporate into air. He wearied her too with his exacting demands upon her time, and at rare intervals she left him in charge of the kind sharer of her sick-room duties, and escaped from the house and the 'builded desolation' of the city, to wander among the slopes of the Pentlands or the green solitudes of the nearer Braid Hills.

She spent every spare hour upon her commissioned picture, and at length there came an afternoon when the last touches were added and she stood gazing upon it with a full heart. On the morrow it was to be sent off to the gentleman who had ordered it; so, after she had carefully lifted it from the easel, she carried it to her room, intending to take a last look at it before screwing it into the packing-case awaiting it in the studio. Her father was now convalescent, although he was still confined to bed; and, as it had been his habit of late to take a long sleep in the afternoon, she thought that he might safely be left alone for a few hours while she took a much longed-for walk.

In the evening she expected Norman, and she had been so engrossed with her picture that she found herself unprepared to meet him with the definite answer she had promised. This troubled her as she walked through the streets, until at length the throng of people and the busy

thoroughfares were left behind, and there was nothing to interpose between her thoughts and the calm spaces of nature.

She pondered as she walked, weighing with a coldness and deliberation strange in one so young the alternatives that presented themselves in her life. Love or Art!—which should it be? And still as she wandered on, her thoughts rang the changes on Love and Art—Art and Love.

It was a clear and tranquil March evening, and the tawny-rose light from the setting sun made a glory of the western sky.

She followed the wimpling course of the Braid Burn, noting with all an artist's delight how fast the young verdure on its banks was superseding the russet and sapless herbage that had survived the winter. The sedges were beginning to lift their green lances in lusty companies beside the shining water, and a few graceful saugh trees bending eastward like the prayerful Persians of old already showed a misty gossamer of grey buds against the luminous evening sky. The sun was disappearing behind Craiglockhart Hill, casting over all the homely scene a glamour of mysterious colour, and Clara's impressionable soul thrilled with awe as she glanced onwards to the massive Pentlands, whose pastoral solitudes were brooding amid the swift-coming shadows of the night.

She paused to carry away a mental picture of the wondrous scene. Then, retracing her steps, she slowly walked homeward, and lo! a new land of enchantment

lay before her, for the warm green sides of the broad-bosomed Braids were aglow with rosy rays from the north-western sky, and in the distance the leonine profile of Arthur's Seat lay regally purple under the clear cold heavens.

A gentle breeze sprang up, swaying the pendulous boughs of the saughs and rippling the streamlet into a chiller grey, and the vesper song of an early thrush rang out into the air.

As Clara walked quietly on, insensibly the calm that abides with nature entered into her mood. Perfect peace, for the first time for many weeks, possessed her soul, and her artistic perceptions, re-asserting themselves, dominated her whole being once more.

Love!—What was love in comparison with the everlasting revelations of this fair nature around her? Her passion for art rushed over her heart in a flood-tide of new resolve; her uplifted face grew white and tense with emotion, and suddenly she stretched out her arms to the unheeding majesty of the mountains and sky and renewed her vows to live for art alone.

And yet she was conscious all the while of the price that art would demand of her. She knew that she was voluntarily sacrificing love and all the sweet blessings that are a woman's birthright. What was it for which she was thus resigning that sacred birthright?—Poverty, ceaseless endeavour, painful and persistent climbing upward to the hill-tops of the mirage-like ideal in weariness, hunger, loneliness, disappointment.

'Well, so be it!' she said as she resumed her home-

ward way, feeling cold and tremulous after her outburst of emotion; 'art is worth it all; and I will try to persuade Norman that he will be happier without me—after a while.' But her heart sank as she pondered over all that was involved in this deliberate renunciation of love, and once more she found herself in the grip of the old conflict.

It is unnecessary to follow her through the labyrinthine mazes of perplexing doubts and contending resolves. Suffice it to say that finally she abjured what all her woman's heart cried out for, and elected to pursue art at any cost.

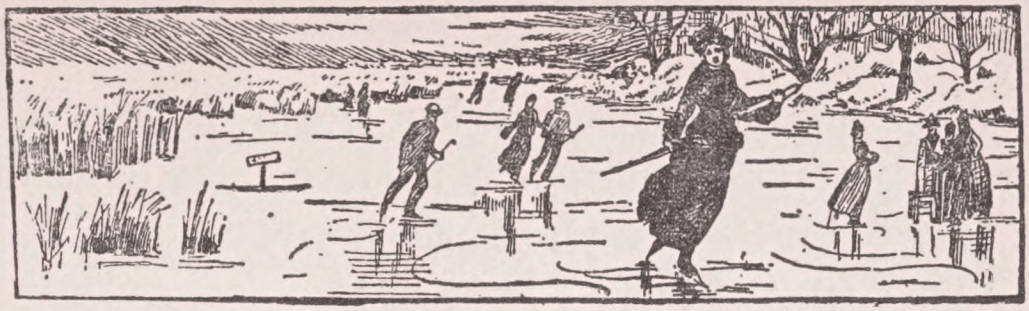
There is no doubt that the thought of her father influenced her decision, for she shrank with ever-increasing shame from the bare idea of subjecting Norman to future and certain disgrace at his hands.

The time had passed with unheeded haste, and as she wended her homeward way, the sky was gleaming softly with the mellow after-glow, and the city scintillated with its myriad lights. At last she reached home with the calm not of beneficent nature but of bootless despair in her heart, and, ascending the dark stair, opened the door of her father's chamber with an anxious apology for her long absence. But the words were arrested on her lips, for the room was empty! She looked and looked again, unable to credit the evidence of her eyes, but the bed was tossed and vacant—its tenant gone! She flew to the studio with a growing terror in her heart—but he was not there.

Swift as thought she sped to her own chamber and

sought for the precious picture which she had hidden there. Alas, alas! it was gone, and with it fled courage and hope, as, with a low cry of intense anguish, she fell prostrate upon the floor, to battle there alone with her grief.





CHAPTER VI.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING.

When some beloved voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness faileth utterly,
And silence against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new,
What hope? What help? E. B. BROWNING.

AN hour or two later, while Clara was still battling with her disappointment and anguish, Norman was on his way to seek her; for that night he was to know the fate of his love. That night he would know if his future lot was to be crowned with the companionship of the only woman in the world for him, or if that sweetest of human joys was to be sacrificed for an inexperienced girl's visionary dream of fame.

His heart beat very rapidly as he stood at the studio door. He dared not hope too much, and yet he could not bear to contemplate Clara's life and his own as remote from each other. She heard his step and opened the door, but he started aghast at the look of stony grief in her face.

'Clara, dearest! what is wrong?' he exclaimed.

She threw her hands over her face and burst into a passion of tears, called forth by the loving pity in his voice.

'My father!'—was all she could say.

'Yes; what of him? Is he ill?'

'He has taken away my picture, and—and—oh, I had hoped so much!' she said brokenly.

Was Norman to be blamed for the quick throb of satisfaction with which he listened to her story, told with many sobs and tears? He could not suppress that thrill of joy even in the presence of her grief, and he folded her in his arms half in triumph as she spoke. The picture gone! The father revealed at last in his utter depravity! Now, indeed, was love's supreme opportunity. His thoughts were in a tumult while he listened as closely as he could to Clara's narrative.

'And you say that you left him in bed, apparently too weak to get up?'

'Yes; he cannot have gone far. Oh, if I only knew where to look for him! He is really ill this time, Norman,' she said pathetically in answer to her lover's look of unbelief.

'How long is it since you came in and found him gone?'

'About an hour ago. I followed him as soon as I was able to the dealer's shop where he usually disposes of my work, but he had not been there. I have sought for him in every place that I thought he was likely to be, but I have seen neither him nor my picture.'

Too well did Norman know that the wretched man had haunts unknown to his innocent daughter. He set his lips firmly together to prevent him from venting his

righteous anger upon the man who was Clara's father, for he knew that she would not brook any expression of such a feeling. He tenderly stroked her dark hair, thankful that in this trial she turned instinctively to him. The loving caress suggested the reason of her lover's presence.

'I had gone out to think over things,' she said in a low voice; 'and, Norman, I think it right to tell you that I came home with my mind made up to let love go. Now everything is chaotic again.—My father has deceived me; he has proved false indeed, and now I see that he will spare nothing. Now nothing seems of any importance to me—I am weary of this disappointing life. Fame itself does not seem worth striving for. Oh, my father! I would have done so much for you!' She stopped, choked with sobs.

'Clara,' said Norman pitifully, 'he is not worth your love;—he is not worth any sacrifice from *you*.'

She shook her head. 'I am very desolate,' she said.

'But you need not be!' cried Norman. 'Why will you thus persistently thrust *me* aside? If you feel so desolate now—ah, what loneliness will be yours in the years to come if you send me away! I tell you again, Clara, your art will not suffice you. I believe that it would be sufficient for some women, but never for you. Give up this most unnatural struggle, my dearest. I honestly confess that to me your difficulty is imaginary. Many married women follow the bent of their genius, cheered on by domestic love,—yes, and find fame too without neglecting any of the sacred duties of home.

Why should not that be *your* lot? You have never said that you do not love me—you dare not!' he cried almost fiercely as he rose and looked down on her where she sat by the cheerless hearth.

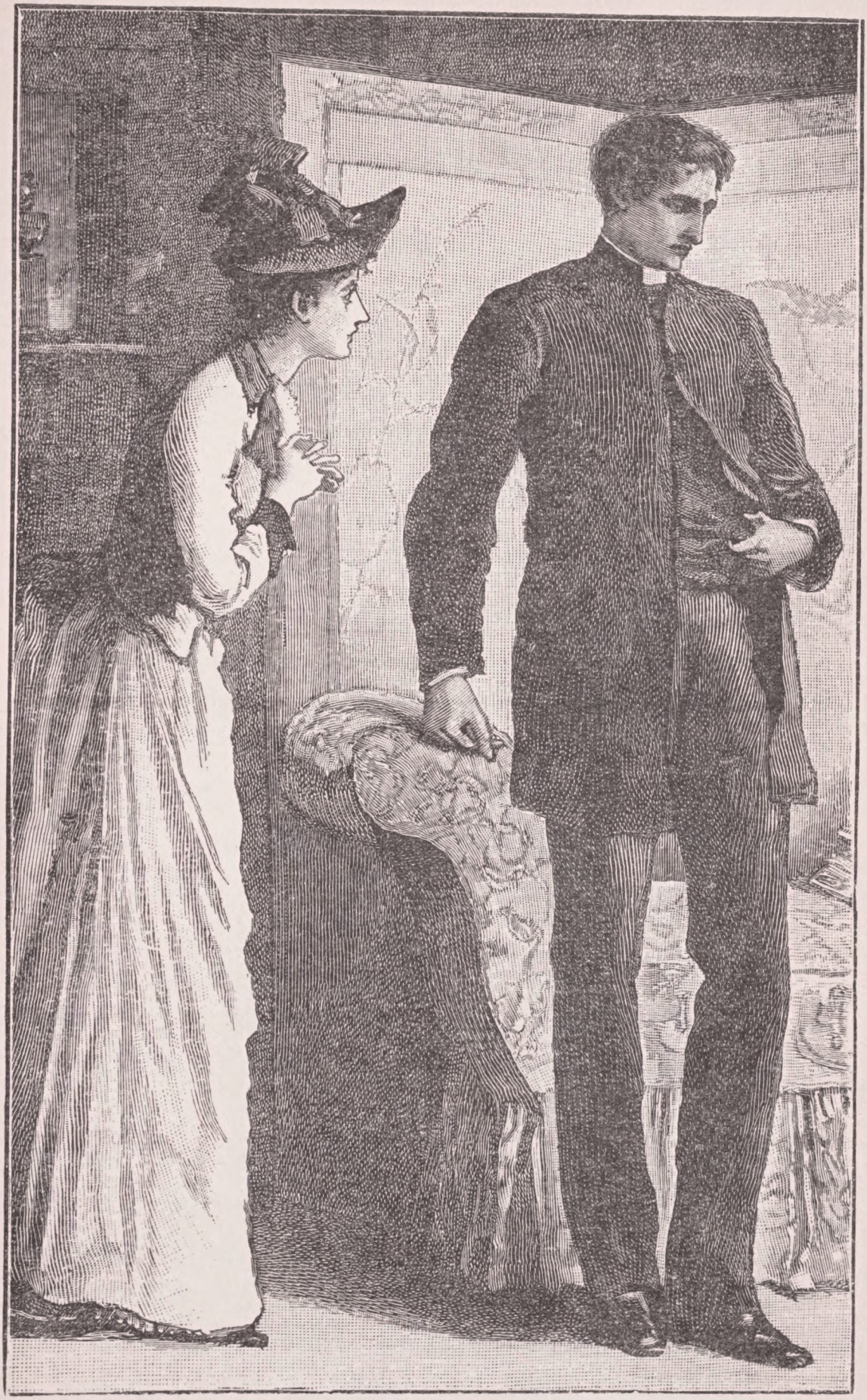
'It is true. I do love you,' she said, lifting her eyes to his with a cold and abstracted gaze which provoked him; 'but I wish—oh, how I wish!—I could make you understand that, beside the gift which I *know* is mine, even love is pale. Love lies on a lower level in my life than it does with most women. It is not absolutely desired and necessary. There are more things in the world than love for me—sorrow, perhaps.'

'And to me love is all the world,' said Norman as he moved restlessly about the studio, his eyes falling at every turn upon many silent witnesses to the truth of Clara's assertion;—brushes, canvases, sketches, all the artistic equipments of a studio told a tale of unmistakable devotion to art. It might have been a man's room, so devoid was it of feminine belongings, although there was an atmosphere of purity and a certain dainty nicety of cleanliness which rescued its appointments from the confusion and litter so generally inseparable from the artistic workshop.

'There is something lacking in your love, Clara, or you would feel as I do,' said Norman after a pause.

'I admit it. You had better let me go, Norman. I tell you candidly that I would weary of love if it deprived me of time and freedom to cultivate my art.'

'Have you a heart at all?' he burst out in anger. 'Weary of love! You are mad. I don't believe that



NORMAN AND CLARA. —*Page* 61.

you will succeed in your pursuit of fame if you follow it in such a heartless manner.'

Clara shivered and turned away as he advanced towards her.

'Farewell, Clara!' he said with a tremble in his deep voice. 'I will no longer submit to be tossed hither and thither—the whim of a girl's unstedfast heart. Love need no longer be a stumbling-block in your path. You have wilfully chosen a rough path and a lonely, and you have already trampled upon one heart which stood in your way. How, therefore, can you expect happiness—you—a woman—after disowning love? Think sometimes of me that your sorrow may be as keen as it deserves to be. I will not say that you have blighted my life, for a man may outlive his love—a woman never can.'

He touched her bent brow with his lips and turned to go, when a cry of despair burst from her lips, and she threw herself at his feet in an abandonment of grief.

'Oh, Norman, Norman! Are you cursing me?' she cried. 'I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it from you!'

He stooped, and, raising her gently, led her to a chair.

'I am not cursing you, my poor child. God forbid!' he said, standing pitifully by her side. 'On the contrary, I have to bless you and thank you for the love which has brightened the past; but I must repeat that I would be less than man if I could not in the future do without it. Rest assured that its remembrance shall be to me a sacred thing—a silent joy which will never inter-

fere with my duties as the years roll on. But if at any time you have need of me—if you change your mind —oh, my dearest!'—his voice faltered with the strength of his love,—'let me know. Allow nothing to hinder you from letting me know, for I shall never cease to love you. Good-bye.'

So saying, he hurried from the studio; and, as the door closed behind him, Clara sank back in her chair in an agony of regret. She listened to his footsteps descending the stair. Could it be that she would never hear them more? The thought was maddening. She sprang to her feet, and, flinging everything but love's sore need aside, she flung open the door, and cried aloud in a shrill and desperate voice,—

'Norman, Norman! Oh, come back!'

He heard her, and his face grew white.

'Oh, come back!' she cried again; and he sprang up the stair, and in a moment they two were clasped fast in an embrace as strong and passionate as if they had escaped from the brink of another world.

'Now, indeed, I shall never let you go!' cried he rapturously, kissing her again and again. 'Own, you cruel one, that love is best!'

'I cannot do without it; but oh, Norman, what if I should mar our future by becoming discontented? I do not understand myself,' she said with a sigh; 'I thought that I could do without you.'

'But you cannot!' cried Norman triumphantly. 'Come and let us dance among my fallen rivals—the easel and

the paint-boxes!' and in the exuberance of his joy he waltzed her round the room.

'Be quiet, you silly boy!' cried Clara breathlessly. 'I wonder what the sober people at Otterton would think if they saw you now?'

'Oh, they would wish they were in my position!'

'What! all of them?—the old maids and the young ladies too? Don't be so silly, Norman.'

'Not after to-night, my dear; but to-night I really must dance over these paint-boxes. Come! Tra, la, la! Tra, la, la! I have conquered the paint-boxes!'

'But, Norman, do listen a moment; I am terribly in earnest.'

'Yes, yes, I know! That is your chief fault,' cried he playfully, leaning against the wall to recover from his exertion.

'But, Norman, what is to become of us if I should find the walls of home too narrow? Oh, Norman, I am very much afraid that I shall pine for freedom to follow my art. I am afraid that I may reproach you in the years to come.'

'Nay, Clara, but I am not afraid! Believe me, the love which has conquered you in spite of yourself will dwarf those visions of solitary fame. Why, my dear, when you are a great artist, how proud I shall be when you will turn to me and say, "If I had not married you, I would never have painted so well." And I will laugh at you and quote,—

> 'Tis not your work, but Love's. Love, unperceived,
> A more ideal artist he than all,
> Came, drew your pencil from you—

Yes, Clara, love alone can guide your brush. Take my word for that, for you know,—

> I am Sir Oracle,
> And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark.

Clara laughed, but at heart she was uneasy, for with the keen prevision of an imaginative temperament she foresaw all the difficulties of reconciling the essential duties of married life and the imperious demands of art.

She was not quite happy even with her lover's arms around her, for she felt that she had weakly declined from her lofty ideal upon the lower range—as she considered it—of love and ease. Her conscience whispered of instincts stifled, of aspirations never to be realised, of treachery to what she still held to be her true vocation. And yet she loved him, and she felt with a pang that her ambitious dreams of fame were cold indeed without the rosy glow from love's sun to warm the steep and snowy mountains of endeavour.

Well might Norman gaze at her grave face with an uneasy premonition of the instability of his happiness, for he divined that he had surprised her into surrender at a moment when her hopes of success had sustained a rude shock, and when all her little world threatened to fall in ruins at her feet.

'And now, let us talk of what is to be done for your father,' said Norman firmly.

Clara's face flushed, and she looked up appealingly.

'It must be evident to you, Clara, that stronger measures must be taken than have ever yet been tried. Don't you

see that he will stick at nothing to obtain drink? Will you leave the matter in my hands? Do not fear that I will deal unkindly by him—he is *your* father, my darling; but you must acknowledge that something effective must be done?'

'Yes,' said she in a low voice. 'What do you propose, Norman? I will be guided by you.'

'That's my true darling! Between us, we must persuade him to go into a home for inebriates.'

Clara shuddered and put her hands before her eyes. She felt very keenly upon this painful subject and shrank from it sensitively. Norman saw that he must open her eyes more fully—even if somewhat rudely—to the desperate depravity of her drunken father. He knew of secrets in the life of the wretched man—of evil deeds and vile haunts which he dared not bring before this pure-minded maiden who clung so pathetically to the frayed cords of filial love which her lover's hand, 'cruel only to be kind,' was about to sever.

'Clara, dearest,' he said, drawing her closer to his side, 'look back over your life with your father. Has he ever done an unselfish act? Has he ever studied your feelings or regarded your womanly scruples? Has he ever denied himself any pleasure which he knew must be wrung out of your toilsome days? You know he has not.'

'But my mother left him in my charge,' faltered Clara.

'She did not realise any more than you did to what depths a depraved drunkard may sink. She was little more than a girl herself when she died, and your father blighted *her* life. He is a bad man as well as a weakling,

and I will not insult you by telling you what I know of his wicked courses. He trades upon your feeling for him; he cares nothing for your love, and his only desire is to make money out of you.'

'Oh, Norman, this is terrible!' she cried in tears.

'But it is true, my darling. Cast away this sentiment—this foolishness of your tender heart, and leave him to be dealt with by sterner methods. *Your* filial affection, my poor Clara, is nothing but a habit, an instinct which your father has fostered for his own ends. You have never known the love of a father in the true sense of the word. Your love is but a blind, inherited instinct, I repeat; and I pray that you may not recognise it as such too late.'

'Oh, Norman, Norman, that is a hard doctrine!' sobbed she. 'You do not know all it means for me, for I *do* love my father—as he once was and as he yet again may be. You are mistaken when you say— What noise is that?' she cried hurriedly, starting to her feet. 'Oh, something has happened to my father! It is a judgment on me!'

Norman opened the door in alarm, for the measured tread of men ascending the stair fell upon his ear. Clara resisted Norman's well-meant attempt to place himself between her and the group of men who bore a silent burden in their midst.

'My father, my father!' she shrieked. 'Is he dead?'

'No, no, miss, he is not dead,' said one of the men; 'but he has met with an accident. He fell down in front of a cab.—He was as drunk as a piper,' whispered the man aside to Norman.

'Oh, what shall I do?' cried Clara, turning to her lover.

'Be calm, dearest,' he whispered. 'The men shall carry him to his room, and I will go for a doctor. Would you like me to bring Katie Lawson to see after things?'

'I'll do all that is necessary, sir,' said the woman who was in the habit of sharing Clara's sick-room vigils.

'Thank you. Let the men pass, Clara. Follow me,' said Norman to them, and he led the way, while Clara sank helplessly into a chair.

She heard her father moan as the movement of the stretcher jarred upon his shattered frame, and the poor girl thought with a pang of bitter self-upbraiding that while she and her lover had been planning her father's future, that father was being carried towards home maimed and bruised perhaps beyond chance of recovery.

She was a girl of extraordinarily vivid and undisciplined impulses, and when Norman returned to her to let her know that the doctor had come and to break the sad tidings that he had pronounced the injuries to be dangerous if not fatal, she turned upon him with unreasonable reproaches, and, seeing him stand looking bewildered at her, in a strong revulsion of feeling she cried out,—

'I hate you! I detest you! Go away. You sought to alienate my love from my father, and now he will die and I shall see him no more! It is like a judgment upon us. I retract my admission of love for you. I do *not* love you. I love my father and my art. You are a tempter! Go out of my sight, for I cannot endure to look at you!'

'Clara, Clara! you are beside yourself, my poor darling!'

'Go, I tell you—go!' she repeated vehemently. 'Why will you force your attentions upon me? I was trapped into yielding to you, and now I hate you.'

Norman was stung to the quick. He lifted his hat and rose.

'You shall taunt me no more,' he said sternly yet sadly. 'I do not understand you, Clara. There is nothing for it but to say good-bye after all! Oh, my darling, how you have wronged me! I love you still, but never will I return to you until with your own lips you call me.'

'What! you *taunt* me! You are indeed unmanly. It is true that I called you back once, but I will never be so weak again.'

'So be it. I have only to remind you that if at any future time you should desire my help,—my friendly help, —ask it, I implore you. We can never be indifferent to each other, and my love for you is changeless—but you are free as air. Good-bye.'

Once more the door closed behind him—once more she heard his footsteps descending the stair. Her face blanched, for at that moment when she had so flouted and cast out love she discovered how strong were its bonds by the wrench with which they broke asunder. She stretched out imploring hands, but this time she kept an almost superhuman guard upon her lips, that would fain have braved shame once more for the blessed freedom of crying aloud for her lover to return. She stood dumb and motionless until the last echoes of his steps were

lost among the hurrying feet of the crowds in the populous street. Then—then indeed her heart sprang to her lips in an anguished cry which rang once more through the bare and cheerless studio—'Oh, Norman, Norman, come back!' But he did not hear, for he was hastening homeward across the quiet and almost deserted Meadows; and it was as well for both that the cry of anguish did not reach and recall him, because a union based on such weak self-surrender on Clara's part would have been a source of unhappiness for both in the future.





CHAPTER VII.

ALONE!

This is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.
TENNYSON.

WE will pass lightly over the details of the momentous day of Norman's ordination.

Doubtless it was with a heart divided between his private anxieties and his public responsibilities that he found himself, after the events of the previous night, standing next afternoon before the unknown congregation who had chosen him to be their teacher in spiritual things, and taking upon his untried shoulders the burden of those solemn obligations which seal the opening of every Presbyterian ministry.

Who among my Scottish readers is not familiar with the austerely simple yet impressive routine of an ordination service as it runs its course before the assembled Presbytery, the solitary candidate for the ministry, and the hushed gathering of observant people? Not to mention the addresses from the pulpit to the new pastor and his people, who could behold unmoved the solemn

and touching scene where the young minister, after taking upon him the vows of his calling, bows his head to receive the sacred 'laying-on of hands' by the Presbytery? A touching scene indeed it is to witness the tottering steps of the older, white-haired members as they come forward to lay trembling, withered hands on the young head of their latest brother, who has thus publicly consecrated himself to the service of God.

After the heartfelt benediction which concludes the service, there begins for the newly inducted minister the ordeal of standing in the—generally draughty—lobby of the church, while one by one the members of his congregation file past and extend to him as they go a welcoming hand. For my part, I always pity the man who has to pass through such a tedious ordeal. He has doubtless been much moved by the solemn proceedings in the church and would fain turn aside and ponder over his ordination vows; but not yet has the longed-for opportunity arrived. I wonder if, as the people filter past with outstretched hands, he ever finds himself trying to feel the congregational pulse in the lump, as it were, while shaking hands so decorously with the individuals? I wonder if he recognises the worldly pride and gross Pharisaism of the bulk of the kid-gloved gentry who flaunt past? or the timid welcome from the saints in much-mended black mittens? or the manly Christianity of the bare and horny palm? or the ostentatious gush of the sentimentalist whose feelings are continually oozing out in a disagreeable state of thaw from her daintily gloved finger-tips? or the limp, disjointed hand-shake of

the man whose heart is a frozen well, and the handle of it consequently off the fang? or the insidious, fishy touch of the sanctimonious hypocrite? or the modestly fervid clasp of unpretentious Christians? Enough! my pen has run off with me, and I have left myself no space wherein to describe the dinner with its piquant sauce of clerical jokes, nor the soiree in the evening with its presentations of cloak and Bible and its well-filled platform of elders, deacons, and, above all, representative young men, whose presence there declares to a guileless congregation that their choice is indeed not only a prince among preachers and pastors but all that could be desired as a 'guide, philosopher, and friend.' We know them all too well, and tolerate them only for the sake of the 'eternal verities' which they symbolise.

It was inevitable that Norman, as he sat in the midst of the gravely-rejoicing people in the evening, should turn his gaze inward and strive to imagine what Clara at that moment was doing. The present, with its lights and warmth and its social intercourse, looked shadowy and dreamlike;—the past, with its love and sorrow, was a far more present reality to him. Surely never before did a young minister stand on the threshold of his arduous life with so few beloved and familiar faces to cheer him with answering glances.

His mother, far away in sunny Mentone, was doubtless present in spirit with him that night; but Clara—Clara, who ought to have been his most precious invisible earthly companion—was lost to him. She had tossed his love to and fro like a ball, only to fling it away at last; and now

what thoughts were hers as she watched beside her father's bed?

Norman roused himself with an effort from the contemplation of the picture of the beloved one that his fancy conjured up; and, as he gazed into 'the sea of upturned faces' before him with a kind of hopeless wonder in his eyes, he became aware that Katie Lawson—faithful, homely Katie—was looking at him with a distressed and anxious countenance. Hers was the one familiar face that linked together the past and the future; but for her he felt that he was indeed alone in his new life, and he bent forward with an impulse of affection and smiled kindly into her rugged, honest face. But, although Norman did not know it, there was one fateful presence in the assembly destined to exercise a momentous influence upon his future.

Clara was, as Norman divined, sitting that night beside her father's sick-bed in distant Edinburgh; but, —alas for the limitations of love's intuitions! Norman did not know how she had in imagination followed him through every hour of the ordination day. Her thoughts had been with him even as his with her, and yet neither felt that nearness of spirit which, had the issue of their love been happier, might have compensated them for the insurmountable barriers of material space.

To her already well-nigh overwhelming burden was now added the grief of knowing that her father was dying, for the doctor had whispered to her at the door of the sick-chamber that morning his conviction that her father's strength was insufficient to enable him to survive

the shock his system had sustained, and that although he might linger for a few days, or even weeks, in a semi-conscious state, still she must prepare for the very worst.

Yes, the shadow of death—that 'shadow feared of man'—was in the sick-room, dignifying with its awful presence the wreck of humanity lying there with questioning eyes that followed Clara's movements as she approached the bed to arrange the pillows which supported his head.

'Father dear,' she said softly, 'can you hear me when I speak to you?' He moved his head slightly. 'Oh, father, you are dying. Let us pray together!' she sobbed, as she knelt low and put her arms protectingly about the shattered figure. A frightened look came into his dull eyes as Clara, half-distracted with pity for him, poured out her soul to God in prayer and besought merciful pardon for the sinful man who had no words to plead for himself. She looked up at length, for a strange and inarticulate murmur proceeded from her father's trembling mouth. She bent her head closer towards him to distinguish, if possible, the words, but she could not. She could only pray again, hoping that her father too was interceding before that Divine Presence whose perfect love can penetrate through all the stammering, imperfect speech of man, down into the buried soul that gropes for Him.

Soon afterwards the dying man fell into a troubled doze, and Clara's place was taken by the friendly neighbour from down-stairs, who persuaded her to try to

obtain some sleep before she resumed her watch in the sick-room.

Poor Clara! It has been our lot to see her always in exceptionally trying circumstances, and the reader may wonder with some impatience if she could ever have been a smiling and rosy girl. Let us follow her as she entered the solitary studio that night. She walked up to a portrait hanging against the wall, and gazed long and wistfully at a radiant young girl-face there pictured. It was a portrait of herself, done by her father before his natural affection for her and his artistic admiration of her beauty had been killed by his passion for strong drink. How well she remembered the happy day when she had led Norman, playfully blindfolded by her loving hands, in front of the just-completed portrait;—how well she remembered his sudden start and exclamation of delight as the smiling pictured face dawned upon him;—and ah, how well she remembered the proud and loving words in which he told her that, lovely though the picture was, the original was fairer still—that the painted face was 'as moonlight unto sunlight'!

And now, alas! it was the *real* face which was as moonlight unto the radiant sunlight that gleamed from the face on the wall! She turned away with a sigh, for the retrospect was bitter. She pondered with awe over the swift coming of death, and tried to reconcile herself to the inevitable and to brace herself for a humiliation and a terror striding fast to confront her—the humiliation and the grim terror of absolute want.

Clara's purse, always a slender one, was now nearly

empty, for her father's illness culminating in the rash act which led to the fatal accident had almost drained it, and she was quite unprepared to meet the additional expenses that loomed before her. She was vexed with the stern necessity which compelled her to reflect that her father was the cause of all the humiliation which now threatened her, but the thought would not be banished, although pity cried aloud to remember that he was now lying on his death-bed.

She looked round the studio in search of any stray sketch which might be converted into bread, only to discover that her father had already disposed of every saleable scrap. She was so weak, so solitary, so friendless, that if Norman's mother had but been at hand, the whole pitiful tale might have been unfolded to her in spite of pride; but that kind friend was far away, little dreaming of the terrible strait to which Clara was now reduced.

For to the lonely girl there had come one of those dark hours in the lot of humanity in which hope and self-deception and all the plausible shows which veil the realities of life are ruthlessly torn aside by the hand of fate, and the soul is left naked and alone to confront the storm and stress from which there is no escape. Such hours are supreme tests of character, for truth — and truth alone—can survive that pitiless buffeting upon the stormy ocean of life.

Thus Clara, brought face to face with her soul, realised as she had never done before for what paltry trappings of sheer vanity she had bartered that best gift of God—

a tender human love. Ay, now she owned with bitter tears that she had indeed thrown away a priceless boon for the vain chance of possessing the glittering bauble which she called fame. Fame! it was but a tear-drop holding in its minute cameo the rainbow of promise brought there by the sun of love. And now that cheering sun had gone down and the rainbow had disappeared, leaving all her little sky misty with blinding rain.

Ah, she looked back through the blessed years in which Norman had loved her, owning now how much her inspiration had depended upon his presence; and she cried aloud that she had been foolish and blind and selfish beyond all women in thus renouncing love.

There was one way of escape for her, but it was a path of humiliation. Not yet could she bear the pain of treading it. If she could recall Norman, as he in his large-hearted and unconventional simplicity had invited her to do, and confess to him all her folly, her despair, and her love, would not his arms open wide to shelter the shamed head on his breast? She could not do it. She dared not further insult that noble, long-suffering affection by pleading to be restored to its shelter in order that she might escape—the pangs of hunger! That was the root of her despair, she owned to herself with a bitter laugh of self-contempt.

She must suffer and endure as long as she lived. But death would surely not long elude one who so longed for its coming.

So she thought in her young and ignorant impatience, not knowing that by the noble fortitude and humility of

lifelong striving, the true Rest and Crown can alone be won.

Next morning brought no relief from the feeling of depression; but even while she was thus submerged beneath the waves and billows of sorrow, help was hastening towards her from an unknown and unsuspected quarter.





CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

New airs begin to blow,
And on the calm majestic tide
Our full-sailed galleon comes to glide
Love with its little skiff has gone,
But life's great bark sails on. L. MORRIS.

ON the morning after his ordination, Norman might have been seen sauntering with observant gaze through the streets of Otterton.

While he was proceeding along Queen Street, the principal thoroughfare, he noticed the large and faultlessly attired figure of Mr. Morgan emerging from the entrance to an ornate building, which was the National Bank.

The sight of the ruling elder descending the steps of the building and crossing the street at an angle which would lead him straight to the railway station, suggested to Norman that he was going on a journey, and, as he had several questions to ask, he quickened his pace and overtook him just as he reached the covered way leading to the platform.

'Good morning, Mr. Morgan,' said he, holding out his

hand to the other, who paused and returned the greeting with an ostentatious frankness of demeanour that seemed to be pleasingly conscious of onlookers and to challenge them to give his immaculate appearance and character the very closest scrutiny.

'Ah, how are you after last night's successful proceedings, Mr. Reid? Are you making acquaintance with Otterton this fine morning? It is a fine town, sir,—a fine town, if somewhat smoky.'

'Are you bent on a journey to-day?' asked Norman.

'Yes; I am going as far as Edinburgh. I have just seen in this morning's paper the account of an accident which I have reason to believe concerns a—a relative of mine. I return by to-morrow, however, for I would not on any account miss hearing you on Sabbath.'

Norman reddened. He found Mr. Morgan's boisterous kindness somewhat overpowering, and, moreover, he was conscious of a slight but unmistakable feeling of antipathy towards him, why he could hardly tell. He waited until Mr. Morgan had procured his ticket, and then walked with him to the Glasgow platform.

'Can I be of any service to you in Edinburgh?' inquired Mr. Morgan. 'Can I carry a message to your mother, for instance? I observed that your worthy housekeeper was the only occupant of the minister's pew during yesterday's services.' This was said with some curiosity. 'I think, Mr. Reid, I have heard you say that your mother is a widow?'

'Yes. Unfortunately she is too delicate to stand our climate in the winter and spring. I look forward to

having her here during the summer; but at present she remains at Mentone. It was a great disappointment to us both that she was unable to be present last night,' replied Norman.

'Doubtless,' rejoined his companion. 'Then there is nothing I can do for you? That train is late as usual!' he exclaimed, taking out his watch and comparing it with the station clock.

'I thought of asking you a question or two about my work,' replied Norman; 'but I can wait. I shall call upon you next week.'

'Ah, that will do very well, my dear sir,' said Mr. Morgan with a perceptible increase of warmth. 'I expect that we shall see a great deal of each other, and you could not come to a better quarter for any information about the affairs of Free St. John's. I flatter myself—nay, I humbly trust—that I have done not a little for the good of the community, and that in the teeth of much opposition too. I am sure that we shall get on together,' he repeated, looking kindly into Norman's somewhat unresponsive face. 'Your face reminds me of some one—of whom I cannot at this moment recollect. Ah, there comes the train at last. Good-day, Mr. Reid; it won't be my fault if we don't get on better together than your predecessor and I did,' he cried, leaving Norman with the uncomfortable suspicion that somehow or other a warning seemed to lie in his last words.

But it was a lovely day in early spring—full of that silent promise and intangible gladness so irresistibly suggestive of the sweetness of life when one is young with

the year, and Norman's pulses bounded pleasantly in spite of his vague disquietude of spirit as he wended his way out of the crowded station and through the principal thoroughfares of the town.

But with these our story has nothing to do. We will follow Norman to the humble locality called the Waterside, a long and insanitary line of workmen's houses standing on the south bank of the Otter and connected by several wooden bridges with a similar row on the other side, which for the sake of distinction was called North Waterside.

There were of course 'lands' of respectable houses scattered among the ruder dwellings, but on the whole the Waterside had a squalid and poverty-stricken appearance, and it teemed with pallid inhabitants who felt the return of spring—not in the glad uprisal of joy that in more favoured quarters was even now greeting the renewal of the young green leaves, but chiefly in the sense of a welcome freedom from the nipping cold of the winter, to which their ill-clad, ill-nourished frames rendered them peculiarly susceptible, and perhaps in a faint stirring of deep-buried hope, that immortal deception which, in spite of the testimony of the ages to the tantalising and delusive nature of its promises, still dupes down-trodden humanity.

Norman sauntered slowly westward along the Waterside, receiving here and there a greeting from a humble member of his as yet unknown congregation; and gradually he began to feel oppressed at the near sight of such abundant misery and prevailing squalor.

In truth, he was feeling as he had never felt before the responsibilities and burdens of his divine calling pressing upon his spirit, already laden with a purely personal sorrow on his own and Clara's account.

Many a shrewd glance followed the new minister of Free St. John's. Groups of old men, too feeble to work, were clustered around the low stone parapets of the bridges, and they also followed the stalwart figure with the slow gaze of age.

The foundries were clanging busily, and the droning whirr of machinery made itself heard through the open windows of the factories, and the streets were filled with the babble of the voices of children, who swarmed on the sunny pavement noisily merry with their games, while tiny little ones sat on the knees of the patriarchs who occupied the stone benches by the doors; and infancy and eld alike looked at the stranger with very much the same grave, wondering expression in their eyes.

Other old people crept along the sunny side of the street,—the mere shadows of human beings,—and a few invalids watched from sheltered corners the young minister who was so ready to smile and talk with them all, careless, apparently, of denominational differences. Norman, indeed, was mindful only of their common humanity and its claims upon his compassion, and it spoke volumes for the genuineness of his personality that the many hard-wrought, embittered people with whom he talked that day did not resent his numerous and pointed questions. They felt drawn to confide in the young minister, for, though he plainly lacked the experience

which nothing but age can bring, he possessed the God-given magnet of keen spiritual intuitive sympathy.

It was divined that day by many poor souls grown callous of their own misery, and, in most cases, long accustomed to the frigid ministrations of careless pastors, that here stood one who looked into their eyes with the observant and kindly gaze of a brother. Many were the friendships unconsciously inaugurated that day—friendships that were destined to last through weal and woe during all the vicissitudes of Norman Reid's after career.

I do not know if this instinctive desire of his to get behind conventionalities, and to look into the saving mystery of pain, was of any other practical benefit to him than that it put him into a position for realising very vividly the vicarious sufferings of Him who bore the sins of the world.

Norman could never rest content with the outward semblance of things; all his life long he strove to pierce the veil of reserve that shrouds the true nature of even the commonest and most unattractive of God's creatures.

He pursued his walk towards the Manse past the various works and the adjoining residences of the owners, mostly old-fashioned and substantial 'harled' houses, nestling amid their spring luxuriance of graceful trees. He passed the foundry of Morgan & Co., and the modern villa of his wealthy ruling elder farther down the river. It was a very fine mansion indeed, and was surrounded by a large and pleasant garden shady with budding beeches, through the boughs of which silvery glimpses could be obtained of the swiftly-flowing Otter.

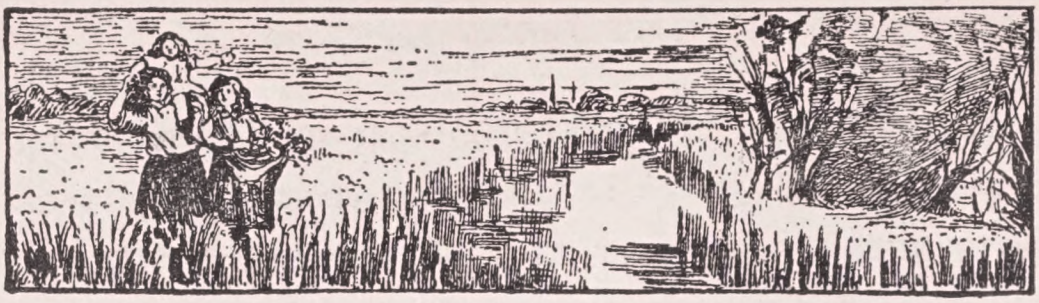
An ornamental bridge of iron spanned the river opposite Mr. Morgan's gates, and Norman crossed it and walked a few yards up the river, to where his own pretty manse stood gleaming whitely through the misty boughs of the garden trees.

He opened the gate and stood for a moment looking eastward along the Otter to the Waterside, whence his eye travelled through the smoke of the town to the glittering spire of Free St. John's Church.

As the young minister gazed with his thoughts full of the manifold needs of the human beings near his door, he became endued with an enthusiastic and holy zeal to work in this vineyard of the Lord. He bowed his head upon the bars of the gate in an overwhelming impulse of pity for his brother men,—the toilers and the sufferers of the earth,—and with a prayer whose only outward sign was a sob he asked God's help in his work.

'Ah, poor humanity!' said he as he walked along the garden path. 'Ah, poor humanity, that requires to be scourged heavenward! Help me, O God, to do Thy work faithfully here, for it needs the pity and the patience of Thy dear Son to gaze with any hope at all on the sinning, groping, suffering children of earth.'

Such was his prayer on the threshold of his ministry, and his personal sorrow was forgotten as he went into his study and shut the door.



CHAPTER IX.

THE RULING ELDER IN A NEW LIGHT.

A friend in need
Is a friend indeed! OLD PROVERB.

ON the same afternoon, while Clara was at her post in the sick-chamber, a quick ring at the door-bell startled her from her sad brooding. She stole on tiptoe across the floor, shutting the door softly behind her lest any chance sound should reach her father's ears; and, having walked downstairs, she opened the outer door and found herself confronted by the tall figure and inquiring countenance of a total stranger.

She looked at the gentleman somewhat nervously, wondering if he had some claim upon her unhappy father; and Mr. Morgan—for it was he—on his side found himself unwontedly excited, and even awkward, as this pale-faced, brown-eyed maiden scrutinised him so closely.

'I must apologise for disturbing you so unexpectedly,' he stammered, his usual bland ease all gone; 'but I saw an account of an accident to Mr. Allan Porteous in the

morning paper, and I thought that he perhaps might be a relative of mine.' He paused with a keen look into Clara's surprised face.

'Yes?' said she interrogatively.

'Did you ever hear Mr. Porteous speak of his wife's brother—Stephen Morgan?' said he. 'I think that you are my sister's daughter. I am Stephen Morgan.'

He spoke with some agitation of manner; but at his words Clara started and drew her slight figure proudly up, saying, 'My mother always mentioned your name with wonder and grief at your strange and unwarrantable silence.'

'Ah, my dear, your face reminds me of my boyhood. You have your mother's eyes,' was the irrelevant answer. 'But I don't understand why you call my silence unwarrantable. My sister never communicated her whereabouts to me. I was abroad when she—married Mr. Porteous, and when I returned home ten years ago, I sought for tidings of her—only to discover that she was dead. I did not even know that she had left a daughter, and it was your father's somewhat uncommon name and also his profession that suggested to me that he might be my dear sister's husband. You are very like my poor Lizzie. We were fond of each other in the old days.'

'But you left her letters unanswered, although she wrote repeatedly pleading for a kind word from you,' said Clara reproachfully. She could not take this new relationship into her heart unquestioningly.

Her uncle started and flushed.

'I never received her letters. I hear of them now for the first time. I was abroad at the time of your mother's marriage, as I have already said, and moving about from place to place. But my mother always had my address, and my letters were re-directed to me by her. She sent all my correspondence to me from home. This is her doing; she must have kept back my sister's letters! She was indeed a cruel and a hard mother!' he cried, discharging the words at Clara as if they had been pellets. 'Yes, she was a hard woman and resented Lizzie's elopement until the day of her death.'

'Come in,' said Clara in a softer tone. 'My mother often spoke of you. Ah, what a pity it is that you have found us too late!' It never occurred to her to think of any benefit to herself arising out of this unexpected appearance of her uncle. She led him into the studio, which looked very dusty and forlorn, and placed a chair for him near the window. He sat down mechanically, mopping the sweat from his brow, and for a few minutes there was silence between them.

'Can I be of any use to you? Is your father'— Mr. Morgan paused, uncertain how to proceed.

'He is dying,' said Clara in a dull tone, with her eyes fixed on the floor.

'Oh, my dear, I am very sorry! Is it so serious as that? I hope'— Again the usually fluent Mr. Morgan found himself at a loss for words as he gazed upon the sad young face before him, so eloquent of sorrow and self-restraint. But Clara's tears were all wept, and she sat quietly near him, replying to his questions in a low

voice that awoke in her uncle's heart many reminiscences of his long-lost sister.

'Tell me, my dear—is your name Lizzie?' said he.

'No—Clara.'

'Ah, my mother's name! May you have a softer nature than she had! Take care how you treat any one who loves you, my dear. Do not be hard or unforgiving! My mother caused much misery.'

Clara's thoughts flew to Norman. How had she dealt with that tender heart? Was it possible that she could be as unforgiving as this other Clara whose conduct she had so often judged? Ah, no, no! If Norman would but come back to her, how loving, how tender she would be!

'Do you think that your father will be able to see me?' said her uncle, breaking in upon her reverie. 'I should like to return to Otterton by the evening train.'

'To *Otterton!*' exclaimed Clara faintly, holding the arm of her chair with a sudden sensation of falling.

'Yes,' he replied in some surprise. 'I still live on in the old house.'

'I did not know that my mother lived there. She never mentioned the name of the town to me. Is it Otterton near the West Coast?' said Clara.

'Yes. I am surprised to find that you did not know. I must, if possible, return to-night, but I will come back on Monday.'

'I shall see how my father is,' said Clara; but she trembled visibly as she turned to go, and her uncle came towards her hastily.

'Sit down again for a little, my dear,' he exclaimed. 'Surely you are feeling ill?'

'Oh no! I will see if my father is awake.'

Clara went slowly and painfully up-stairs. Her head was in a whirl. 'Otterton! he lives at Otterton!' she whispered to herself. 'And Norman is there!'

She entered her father's chamber. He was awake and conscious for the time being, as she observed.

'Father,' she said gently, 'do you think that you would be able to see a friend?'

The father and daughter had come much nearer to each other in heart during those days of sorrow.

'A friend!' he echoed faintly. 'I did not know that I had such a thing in the world except yourself, my poor little girl.' He put up his hand feebly and drew her down until her young cheek rested on his. These moments of affection were very precious to Clara, and she pressed her cheek closer and kissed him.

'But this is really a friend—a relative; he is mamma's brother Stephen.'

'What? Mr. Stephen Morgan from Otterton! What does he want here?' cried the sick man feverishly. 'Has he come to upbraid me about Lizzie?'

'No, no,' Clara hastened to say. 'But why did you never tell me that mamma's friends lived at Otterton?'

'I wasn't so very proud of them!' said he with some bitterness. 'None of the family recognised our marriage. I never saw this Mr. Stephen Morgan. They treated my Lizzie vilely, but it was all my fault. Poor Lizzie—poor

little wife! I begin to see how I must have ruined her life. I am a poor miserable man.'

He lifted his hand to his head vaguely, and Clara, knowing that this was an indication of returning unconsciousness, soothed him with gentle words and bathed his forehead with a refreshing lotion.

'Don't think any more about the past, father dear; only tell me whether I shall bring Mr. Morgan up-stairs. He is very kind, I am certain.'

'Kind, is he? Perhaps he is good for some money. We need it sorely, eh?' said he with a fitful return of his old sordid nature.

Clara shrank a little and pressed her pale lips more firmly together, but she made no indignant remonstrance, as she once would have done. The iron had entered too deeply into her soul.

'Bring him up,' continued her father. 'He cannot think worse of me than I do of myself.'

When Mr. Morgan found himself standing by the bedside of his dead sister's husband, he could scarcely repress his surprise and disgust at the sight of the moral and physical wreck lying on the pillows. He wondered inly at his sister's infatuation, asking himself what she could possibly have seen to attract her pure and simple heart to this man.

But years spent in evil bring their inflexible revenges, and the superficial charm which had so captivated the inexperienced Lizzie Morgan — the handsome, reckless physique, the dashing manners, the tender devotion of the drawing-master who had won her heart at the boarding-

school on the Clyde, had been lost long, long ago in this degraded semblance of a man. Ah, when we are on the brink of any enticing evil, let us pause and consider. Would we wish our children, our dearest, our God, to condemn us as the years sweep on? Shall we stamp our faces with God's seal or the devil's? Let us 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,' for time must either exalt our mobile human character or degrade it irredeemably.

Clara was watching her uncle, and she saw the movement of repulsion with which he greeted her father—and resented it keenly. She addressed him with a touch of asperity.

'My father has suffered much and he is very weak; so, if you have anything to say to him, say it quickly, before he relapses into unconsciousness. The doctor will be here shortly.'

'Can I do anything for you, Mr. Porteous?' inquired Mr. Morgan. 'I have explained the object of my visit to your daughter, and I will not tire you by repeating my explanations. I am here to be of service to you for my sister's sake.'

'You can do nothing for *me* except give me a decent burial,' rejoined the sick man with uneasy levity. 'When one comes to the end of one's tether in this fashion, there's no more to be done. But the past has an evil way of casting up misdeeds upon the shores of ebbing time, and I would like to take advantage of that while I am in the mood. I acknowledge that I have been a bad husband to your sister, and a bad father to'—

'Father, father!' interrupted Clara in anguish; 'never mind the past.'

He took her hand and stroked it weakly.

'My little girl loves her bad father, you see,' he said, turning to Mr. Morgan with a wistful smile. 'Nevertheless, I have behaved cruelly to her, and'—

Again Clara interrupted him. 'That is past; it is all forgotten. Oh, father, do not revive it!'

'"Coals of fire"—"coals of fire," my darling!' said her father, as she put her arms around him. 'I am glad for *her* sake that you have come,' he said, turning to Mr. Morgan and pointing to Clara.

'You may trust me to provide for her. I have neither kith nor kin except her remaining,' said Mr. Morgan with emotion. 'But do not let thoughts of earthly things any longer distract your attention from your solemn condition.'

The sick man again lifted his hand nervously to his head. 'Clara, where are you?' he said; and she drew near and touched his lips with a stimulant. He rallied slightly.

'You can pray for me,' he said in answer to Mr. Morgan's last words. 'You can pray for me if you think it is—not mean to slink into heaven—in this way;' and thereupon he relapsed into unconsciousness, while Clara sat helplessly by his side with tearless eyes.

'Have you no one to help you, my dear?—no nurse?' said her uncle compassionately. 'You are quite worn out.'

'The doctor advised me to let my father be taken to the Infirmary, but I preferred to nurse him myself,' said she simply.

'Ah!' said her uncle, a light breaking in upon him suddenly as he glanced round the poverty-stricken apartment. Were they in poverty then?—perhaps in actual want? The thought stung him to the quick and he rose abruptly.

'I said that I intended to return home this evening,' he said huskily; 'but my place is with you, my poor child. I will go and procure a nurse; and afterwards you shall rest. Oh, my dear, if I had but known sooner!' He kissed her and hurried away.

That night Allan Porteous died.



CHAPTER X.

WITH THE STREAM.

I find no spring while spring is well-nigh blown;
I find no nest while nests are in the grove;
Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells alone—
My heart that breaketh for a little love!

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

ON the Monday after Norman's first Sabbath at Otterton, while he sat at breakfast, Katie entered the room with the morning paper in her hand, and that look of alert importance usually displayed by the bearers of ill-news.

'I see the name of Allan Porteous, drawing-master, among the deaths the day. I wish I could have found time to gang and see that puir lassie,' she said.

'Then the accident has proved fatal! What will Clara do?' exclaimed Norman.

Katie knew of his engagement. She gave him the paper, and as he silently conned the announcement,—'At Lauriston Place, on the 12th instant, Allan Porteous, drawing-master. Funeral on Tuesday at two o'clock P.M.,'—she proceeded to interrogate Norman in her usual practical manner.

'You'll be gaun to the funeral? I'm sure he must be a guid riddance to puir Miss Clara. She hasna had the life o' a dog with him. Hooever, it's an ill wind that blaws naebody guid, and you'll be bringin' her hame to her ain some fine day. You'll be gaun to the funeral, I'm sayin'?' she repeated, for Norman seemed lost in thought.

'Yes, yes, of course,' he replied abstractedly as he rose and went into his study. He wanted to be alone to think the matter over. How could he acquaint Clara with his sympathy for her without widening the breach already yawning between them? That was the problem that occupied his thoughts. It was not likely, he knew, that he would see her on the morrow, for he felt that she would be as reserved in her grief as in any other emotion. He pictured her alone and sorrowful, without, as far as he was aware, a single living relative to share her vigil of grief or to follow her father to the grave, and at length he obeyed his heart's impulse and wrote her a letter offering his aid in her trying circumstances, expressing his condolence, and beseeching her to let him be to her as a brother; and the letter —incomplete and coldly precise as all letters written under the stress of curbed emotions are sure to be— reached Clara in due course, awaking in her sad heart a passion of longing and regret for him who asked but to be a brother now. She read the letter again and again. Ah, how could he write thus coldly and conventionally after all that had been between them? Was it possible that the love she had dallied with so remorselessly was now no longer hers? She wept, and cried in a passion

of regret, 'Oh, return to me, beloved! When your love forsook me, hope and inspiration fled. Everything has fallen from me. I am desolate. Without you, oh, my best and dearest, I cannot live!' But there was no magical bird with silver wings of peace to fly to Norman and sing the sweet tidings that would have brought him to her feet.

Tuesday morning came and brought to Norman an urgent summons to attend the death-bed of a member of his congregation, residing at the home farm of an estate lying half a day's journey from Otterton. There was no alternative. He must put all other claims aside when imperative duty called, and thus it came about that Norman was not present at the funeral of Allan Porteous.

After her father was laid in the grave Clara had some conversation with her uncle regarding her future. He had not anticipated any difficulty in getting her to return with him to Otterton, and he was disagreeably astonished to find that her will was as strong as his own when he argued the matter with her. She ventured to tell him that she would fain devote herself to art, and she showed him her pictures and sketches with a belief in his sympathy in her project that made him feel ill at ease. It was a project which in the eyes of the substantial man of business seemed simply madness; nevertheless, he had much respect for this pale and self-possessed maiden whose brave endurance and dignified reticence he had had ample opportunities of observing; and he listened gravely to all she had got to say. He knew nothing about art, and he was unable to comprehend how any one—especially any woman—would elect to remain in the—to him—

shady precincts of Bohemia, when a position of respectability and importance was within reach. He would have placed his niece over his own household and given her the ease and position of a lady.

'Do you mean to tell me that you prefer this life of privation? It is a curious fancy, Clara,' he said in a puzzled tone.

'You must not think it a mere fancy, uncle. It has long been the chief purpose of my life. I have been educated for it—and I have made sacrifices for it,' she added quietly.

'But you cannot go on living here alone, my dear,' he remonstrated. 'It is not—the thing for any young girl.'

'Many girls do it. I could tell you of dozens, and they are ladies—every one!' said Clara proudly.

'But in this case there is no necessity that you should do it. I have no one to keep house for me. Come home with me, my dear.'

Clara shook her head.

'I cannot. Do not insist on it, uncle,' she said; and he, being unaware of another hidden motive which swayed her decision, looked with some displeasure into her excited face.

'Certainly I won't urge you to come against your will,' he replied stiffly. 'But I cannot believe that you realise your circumstances. Let me put the matter practically before you. I offer you a home with every refinement and comfort suitable to your position as my niece; and you reject it for this hap-hazard existence and the far-off prospect of making a competence by art. If you will

live alone, why not follow some more remunerative pursuit?'

She winced and reddened with pride.

'But you do not understand!' she cried. 'If I succeed in art'— But here she paused with a deeper blush still. She could not divulge her dream of fame to this clear-headed, matter-of-fact uncle. So she left her sentence unfinished, saying sadly, 'I only know that to succeed in art I must let all else go. I am very grateful to you, dear uncle, for your generous offer.'

It was a new and sweet sensation for Mr. Morgan to be called 'dear uncle' by such a very uncommon and altogether presentable niece. What an attraction she would lend to his home! He would try once more to convince her that that home was the proper place for her. He renewed the attack.

'But you can go on painting, if that is what you mean, in my house at Otterton. I have often seen artists hanging about the banks of the water.' Clara half smiled, for her uncle spoke as if those artists had been some eccentric species of spider who probably hung their webs by running streams; but Mr. Morgan thought her smile propitious, and he hastened to pursue his advantage.

'I really do not think that you have any adequate reasons for refusing the shelter of my roof. You are all alone, and you are—poor.' But he saw by Clara's flashing eye that he had overshot his mark.

'Therefore I will not live on charity!' she said. 'I will work for myself!'

'My dear, my dear, do not be so hasty!' he cried,

grieved at the result of his blunder and very much startled to discern such an amount of fiery energy in Clara's large brown eyes. She stood coldly aloof, for she had started from her chair and was lightly leaning against the table with its litter of sketches. But there was something in the expression of her face which he could not altogether understand. Was it a subtle shade of irresolution after all?

In truth, temptation had once more assailed Clara; for the life that her uncle now offered her was full of attractions for one of her dainty and luxurious nature; and, moreover, she was not without that touch of superstition common to those of imaginative temperament, and she found herself suddenly beset by the conviction that fate was bent on driving her once more across her lover's path. She was ill in body too, and very, very weary of striving against the stream of circumstances.

'I must return to Otterton to-night, Clara,' said her uncle; 'and we must not part in displeasure. I would like to make some arrangements for your comfort if you intend to remain here. I am rich, and there is nobody belonging to me that I know of but you. You must allow me to give you something out of my abundance. I would wish to make your life a little easier for you. I know nothing about art, but I do know that it is a difficult thing for people to make money by it, and, although I have no doubt that you will get on in your profession, I cannot understand why you cannot pursue it at Otterton. I would like to be kind to you.'

Clara took his hand and raised it to her lips some-

what wildly. 'Ah, if you knew!—if you only knew!' she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

'There, there, my dear!' cried her uncle in alarm. 'I will let you have your own way. But you must take this little gift from me to keep my mind at ease about you in the meantime.' He held a purse half deprecatingly towards her. It was a new sensation for him to find himself actually afraid of offering money, for as a rule he flung his charity at servile and grateful recipients from a height of condescension.

'I will take it, uncle, on condition that you will allow me to pay every penny of it back,' said Clara, holding out her hand with a burning blush.

'Tut, tut, tut! Cannot you receive it in the same spirit in which it is given? Dry your eyes, my dear, and cheer up. I will come again and see how this extraordinary experiment of yours is working. You are a strange girl!'

And so Mr. Morgan returned to Otterton, leaving Clara face to face with her future.

There was nothing now to hinder her from setting to work, and by-and-bye achieving her cherished dream. Ah, but she had not calculated on the loneliness, the vacuum in her life, the overwhelming physical depression that haunted her day by day through all the dismal weeks that followed her father's death.

The spring weather had become inclement. Day after day she rose listlessly and drew up the blinds of her chamber window only to find the panes blurred with streaming rain, while the east wind howled in the chimney

and dashed the rain in a grey mist down the dreary street, driving before it the shivering passengers who trudged despondently through the slush in an endless stream. All through the dreary days the influence of the east wind and the misty rain was upon her. She sat shivering and miserable before the fire that hissed as the rain-drops descended the chimney, without an impulse to work. Her canvases stood with their faces to the wall, the colours dried upon her disused palette, she was struck with a paralysis of loneliness against which she was impotent to strive; and still the rain went slanting past on the shrieking wind, and the whole outer world was formless, rain-swept, and grey. She felt shut in from her kind. Self-exiled, resourceless, a prey to memories that well-nigh maddened her, she lived she knew not how, at the mercy of the demon of despondency that for ever dinned into her ears the one word—failure, failure!

The mainspring of her life—which was love, if she had but known it—snapped at last, unable to bear the strain of those lonely days, and with its destruction fled all that made life worth living—that bright resoluteness, that proud belief in her talent which had carried her triumphantly through all the discouragements of the past.

All failed her now, and at length, in dire humiliation and sickness of body and mind, she one rainy night took pen in hand and wrote to her uncle an urgent letter, so full of half-incoherent sorrow and despair that he obeyed it instantly, nor rested until he had taken the poor oppressed girl back with him to Otterton.



CHAPTER XI.

'JIM THE SOCIALIST.'

It's hardly in a body's pow'r
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shared. BURNS.

IT was Norman's custom to walk through the busy streets of Otterton on Saturday afternoons and evenings with the object of obtaining some vivid views of the manner in which the working classes spent their hours of freedom and leisure on that day.

This habit of the young minister had given rise to a good deal of shocked and wondering comment among those who looked upon Saturday as a plebeian sort of day when the streets were given over to the 'common people,' and who, moreover, held the traditional view that the whole of Saturday ought to be observed as a hallowed time for ministerial study. But Norman, having the courage of his opinions, ignored the more or less open hints which some of those 'respectable' busy-bodies thought it their duty to give him, and regularly pursued the 'even tenor of his way' through

the weekly Saturnalia of the Waterside and other similar streets; and it is needless to say that his Sabbath discourses were thus endowed with a fuller measure of spiritual and practical insight and sympathy than could be obtained by any minister who shut his eyes to the world of every-day and contented himself with a diligent but mole-like burrowing into the minds of dead and gone divines.

One Saturday evening, therefore, about six weeks after his settlement in Otterton, Norman set out from the Manse on his usual round, and as he was walking past the Otterbank Foundry his attention was arrested by the sight of a small crowd of workmen clustered about the closed gates, listening with rapt attention to a young man who stood in their midst haranguing. 'Ah,' thought Norman, 'a stump orator holding forth! I wonder what's his subject?' He pressed forward, and by reason of his commanding stature was enabled to see the face of the lecturer, who was winding up an address, evidently on Socialism, with a peroration so flowery in language and so exaggerated in its statements of the blessings of the social millennium whose advent the speaker was predicting, that the conclusion was lost in a burst of mocking laughter and applause, which effectually broke the spell that had hitherto bound the crowd and prepared the way for the 'heckling' in which the soul of the working man delights.

Norman, in a characteristically unconventional manner, paused on the outskirts of the crowd to hear what was going on.

'A fine face!' said he under his breath as he looked at the flushed and boyish countenance of the orator; 'a very fine face for a working lad; but he's a regular firebrand, or I am much mistaken.'

'Ye hae made a fine speech, Jim Borland, but we'll a' be dead and forgotten ere sic grand doings come aboot,' cried one of the men. 'You that kens so much, see if ye hinna a plan that'll better things for *us*.'

'Well, you might help to better yourselves by joining the Trades' Unions, which aim at reducing the employer's profits by giving the workmen a share of them in the shape of increased wages. At the same time, you should try to advance Socialism by putting men into Parliament —now that you have the ball at your feet—who would carry the measures necessary to bring about the change. Why, then you would all have an equal share of the profits, according to your ability and industry. Equality! Equality is what'—

'Ca' canny, Jim! Ye ken verra weel that Morgan wad gie us a' the bag if we turned Union men. It's easy enough for a young fellow like you to rant aboot Trades' Unions, but we hae wives and weans to think o'.'

'Ye hae him there, Hughie Drennan!' cried another voice from the crowd. 'It's all in my eye, Jim. I wonder to hear ye speak sic Yankee bounce—for, of course, ye hae brocht it alang wi' your high-falutin' English twang frae America. Bide at hame, Jim, and get a wife to clip your wings!'

Jim flushed to the roots of his auburn hair.

'A fine specimen of the working man *you* are, Rab

Reyburn!' retorted he angrily amid the laughter of the crowd. 'You're the sort of man that lets his wife and wee weans hang round the public-house door to catch the leavings of his wages before they get into the gill-stoup!' He turned impetuously towards the laughing crowd—'You are a poor-spirited lot on this side of the Atlantic if the like of Rab Reyburn is to be your spokesman! I don't believe that you are really content to work like slaves for a pittance and pile up riches for such men as Morgan!' Jim struck his hardened hand against the clanging gates of the foundry as he spoke. 'Don't you see that if it was not for the greed and monopoly of capitalists you would all have abundance!'

'Weel, but, Jim, there's nae particular faut to be found wi' Morgan. It's true we hinna verra big wages, but we've constant wark; and a wheen o' us hae been wi' him a' oor days. I'm sure, what wi' a' the grand patents he has the workin' o' an' the orders that are aye comin' in frae foreign countries, we hae hardly kent what it is to hae a day's idle-set for I dinna ken hoo mony years. Na, na, Jim; we'll let the Unions alane an' stick by Morgan as lang as he'll stick by us.'

Norman looked round—but in vain—for a loophole of escape from the crowd which had gradually wedged him round, for he was becoming rather restive in his novel position, although so engrossed were the men that they had failed, as yet, to notice the stranger in their midst.

'Jim Borland,' cried a sarcastic voice, unconsciously quoting Hamlet, 'ye seem to think ye were born to set the warl' richt! We a' ken ye—we ken your father and mother. Honest folk! it wasna frae them ye gat sic notions!'

'I say, Jim, what aboot this grand machine o' yours that we hae heard is to tak' the bread oot o' your neighbours' mouths? Whaur's your "equality" noo, lad?'

'Ay, whaur's your equality noo? I like mixed principles just as ill as I like water among my whisky,' cried Rab Reyburn spitefully in the midst of general laughter.

Jim shrank back as if he had been struck, and for a few minutes he stood dumb and white, listening with downcast eyes and heaving breast to the taunts that were hurled at him by some of the men in the crowd. After much thought and many failures, he had elaborated a system for the production of a particular kind of work by machinery instead of manual labour, and had made in metal a beautiful working model of the appliances by which this result was to be obtained; and it was this that had been referred to as the 'grand machine.'

'Tell us hoo mony o' us are to get the bag when Morgan buys your fine machine!' cried the irrepressible Rab Reyburn.

Jim looked up suddenly and stepped forward with a look of resolution.

'Keep your breath to cool your broth, man!' he cried angrily to Rab; then he turned to the men. 'I will tell

you the truth,' he said in a voice that commanded instant attention. 'My machine was made and offered to Morgan before I began to think so much about the effects of machinery upon manual labour. I'll not deny that I *had* thoughts of the kind while I was making it. In fact, it was the machine itself that compelled me to think, and more than once I was on the point of breaking it to pieces; but I was so proud of it that I could not'—

'It was a great pity that ye didna!' cried a listener sarcastically. 'That wad hae been in keepin' wi' your "equality doctrine."'

But Jim proceeded as if he heard nothing. 'But I began to see that every new invention made the lot of the working man more hopeless.'

'Na, na; you're wrang there. It mak's wark easy!'

'It turns men into machines!' flashed Jim—'machines for putting money into the master's pockets. This invention of mine, for instance—Morgan has offered me a hundred pounds for it.'

'Come, Jim, draw it mild.'

'A hundred pounds,' repeated he emphatically. 'It will produce more and better work in a day than half a dozen men. What then?' he cried, raising his voice to drown the exclamations of the men. 'Why, the machine is of far more importance than the men, even than the man who is needed to guide the iron creature; *he* is the machine. The iron creature thinks for him, works for him, supersedes him. Oh, my fellow-workmen,' cried Jim, quite forgetting his personal interest in machinery,

'I could groan in the streets when I think of this degradation of our humanity. Our lot is rendered more hopeless by every new invention. In this foundry alone there are hundreds of men whose brains are dulled by the monotonous whirr and boom of the monstrous machinery which has done so much to take away a man's pride in the work of his hands, and to make many an intelligent workman a mere dawdling feeder of a power which he cannot understand. And what hope is there for you except you help yourselves? None. The master, here, might be made of his own iron for all he cares about you in your grinding struggles against poverty and injustice. What are you in his eyes but so much marketable commodity—like his iron?'

'Ca' canny, Jim. See that you young chaps in the crood are no' carried off your feet by this palaver,' cried old Hughie Drennan. 'There maun be maister and man, rich and puir. We canna a' be equal, I reckon—neither in brains nor in wealth. Some are born to serve, and some to rule; and, mark my words, Jim,' said the old man with a humorous wink, 'you'll be a maister yoursel' some day, so the less ye say the noo, the less ye'll hae to repent o'.'

Jim reddened, but he stuck to his colours.

'I did not say that men were born equal,' said he. 'What I contend for is that every man ought to have it in his power to share, according to his capacity, in the good things that are going. Don't you think, for instance, that Morgan would be better liked and better served if his men knew that they would share in the profits

when trade is brisk? Then they could afford to work for smaller wages without grumbling when trade was dull.'

'An' what aboot the improvident and the discontented?' argued his grey-haired objector.

'Oh, that state of things would be done away with if men could depend on each other. It's the keen competition that plays the mischief there,' rejoined Jim cheerily as the old man slowly shook his head.

Jim had evidently a fund of hopefulness large enough to supply the whole town with optimism.

'But ye haena telt us what your equality can do for *us* yet,' cried a pale thin man in the crowd.

But Jim had got soured by these frequent interruptions.

'It can do nothing for you until first of all you unite in making a stand for more wages from Morgan. Join the Trades' Unions to a man, and he'll soon come round. A fine Christian he is!' sneered Jim. 'Your confounded Christians are the great hindrances to the progress of the world, with their preaching of "godliness with contentment is great gain," and their "bills of exchange upon heaven," mere dodges for cheating the working man out of his proper share of all that makes life worth living.'

Norman, seeing that the conversation had taken a turn which rendered it difficult for him as a minister of the gospel to keep silence, and not wishing to embroil himself in a public discussion, made another attempt to extricate himself from the crowd, which, however, by this time had

become so large that he found it quite impossible. He was compelled to stand and listen.

'Stick to the point, Jim, and let Morgan's religion alane. It's a pity it doesna agree better wi' him, but that's nae concern o' yours!' cried a voice.

'Very well; I am here to ask you to set your whole force against these monopolists who grind the faces of the poor, who deny honest workmen a reasonable share of what their own labour has produced. There is something radically wrong when we working men have to plead for work and esteem it a favour to obtain it. Great God! it would pay us better to steal.'

'Or to poach,' cried a listener slyly.

There was a general laugh.

'Well,' said Jim with a smile, 'it would only be robbing thieves—according to some folk. But I would have nothing to say to the like of that. I would not steal even the ill-gotten gains of rich men—although they do manage to claw everything towards them with their pitiful muck-rakes of land-laws. What I want for myself and for you is a fair chance to make honest money by the free use of our hands guided by our brains.'

'And wi' sic noble sentiments, Jim, you'll be for refusin' Morgan your machine?' inquired his old tormentor, Rab Reyburn.

Jim made a gesture of impatience, but his face flushed hotly as again the laugh of the crowd rose against him.

'I know what I'm about!' he cried. 'But you! Throw off your easy indolence and begin to think'—

'Come now, dinna craw sae crouse, Jim,' cried a good-natured voice; 'some o' us were thinkin' a gey while before *you* cam' into the warld.'

'And precious little your thinking has come to,' retorted Jim defiantly.

'Tut, tut! the warld's no' that ill to live in wi' wark sae plentifu' that the wives dinna object by-ordinar' to the gless, ye ken. We're no' a' stannin' on our heids to look at the warld upside doon like you, Jim.'

A laugh greeted the workman's sally.

'Laugh away,' said Jim condescendingly; 'but if you would join the Union or become Socialists, instead of lounging and drinking when times are good and drinking and swearing when times are bad'—

'Oh, Lord, he's a temperance reformer! Fareweel to whisky!' cried a voice with a groan of derision.

'Band yourselves together, I say, instead of going on like that, and your power will revolutionise society. Then indeed there will be a chance for the words of our Robert Burns to be fulfilled,—

> Man to man the warld ower
> Shall brithers be, an' a' that.'

'Hooray!' cried Rab Reyburn with a waggish air; 'but whaur does the jinglin' o' the glesses come in, Jim? It mak's me dry to hear Rab Mossgiel quoted an' nae sign o' whisky forthcomin'.'

A few of the more thoughtful among the crowd, however, were beginning to show some signs of being impressed. They listened quietly, and to them Jim addressed himself.

'Yes,' he cried. 'I would fain have masters and men united in the common bonds of brotherhood.'

Here Norman, to his own intense astonishment, interrupted the orator, and fixed the attention of the crowd upon himself.

'There can be no true brotherhood without the belief in a common Father, and He is God!' he cried, his voice ringing solemn and clear into the clear spring air. 'You sneer at Christianity, but you will only obtain true brotherhood and true equality by the universal possession of the Spirit of Christ, which alone can make men just, loving, and unselfish.'

A silence fell upon the crowd. The men looked as if a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst, and some of the older among them began to move off. A few of them recognised Norman, but to the majority he was simply a clerical stranger.

Jim turned upon Norman with a frown upon his handsome face. 'I know nothing about your Christianity except that the loudest of its professors can mind number one best,' he cried rudely. 'It's your affair, and you're paid to shove it down the people's throats, but equality and brotherhood are not in the creed—they may be in the Bible—but they're not in the creed as far as I have observed.'

'I pity you sincerely,' said Norman with dignity, 'if you have never had the felicity of meeting with a true Christian. You are unfair to the genuine followers of Christ.'

'I know nothing about it, I tell you, sir!' reiterated

Jim impatiently. 'Religion is too much of a luxury for a simple chap like me.'

'Some day you will find it a supreme necessity,' said Norman, looking with kindly tolerance into Jim's boyish face, but beginning to realise the embarrassment of his position. 'Come to me then, and we will talk of the true brotherhood of men.' He lifted his hat and turned away, the crowd respectfully making room for him.

'That's a new pattern i' the claith! He served ye richt, Jim, my lad,' said one of the dwindling audience.

'Oh ay,' quoth Jim, chagrined. 'He's a fine one to preach equality! him with his fine manse, and his big salary, and his black coat on every day! It's easy for honey to be sweet, say I.'

'He served ye richt a' the same! I'll gang an' hear him on Sawbath—if it's rainin', that is. The mistress is aye yammerin' to me to gang to the kirk. She says that this Mr. Reid's the verra saut o' the earth,' cried another man.

'Well, let him keep his salt out of *my* porridge. Enough is as good as a feast of *that!*' retorted Jim.

'Dinna speak ill o' the kirk, Jim;—it doesna pay!' cried a shrill voice.

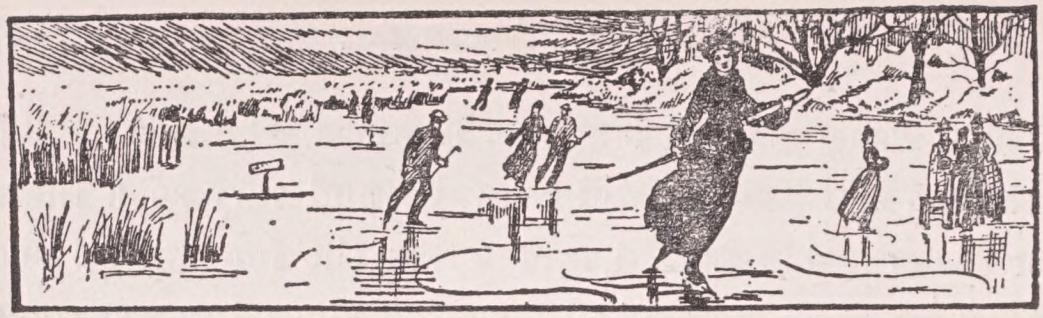
Jim turned to the speaker with a grim smile.

'Oh, *you're* there, Tammas Gemmel!' he said. 'We all know what you hang on by the kirk for!'

'That's true, Tammas!' roared a good-natured giant, lounging against the foundry gates. 'An' a bonnie pictur' ye mak' on the Sawbath day, sittin' gapin' at the minister as if your body was an empty meal-poke an' your mouth the way intil't.'

There was a general laugh as Tammas, who was terribly lacking in self-esteem, slunk away; and very soon thereafter the crowd dispersed, seeing that the fun was all over and the spirit of banter had departed since Jim was somehow or other rather inclined to be silent now.





CHAPTER XII.

A CLOUD NO BIGGER THAN A MAN'S HAND.

I do not love thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this alone I know full well,
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.—TOM BROWN.

WE will pass over the recital of Norman's Sabbath ministrations, with which our story has little to do. Suffice it to say that his message to the people was delivered faithfully and well, and that the church was crowded with attentive hearers—some of whom doubtless were there to worship God, others to criticise the minister's sermon and personal appearance, and many more simply to listen to the preacher whose arrival was the latest sensation in the religious world of Otterton.

He won 'golden opinions from all sorts of people.' One class commended him for his earnest evangelicalism, another for his fine literary style, and still a third, led by Miss Clarissa Bell—who sanctified the fashion in Free St. John's by a judicious course of Christian work—for the graceful manner in which he wore his cloak.

'He was a man of kingly mould, and his cloak was so

becoming! Why, he looked utterly divine in the pulpit!' Such was Miss Clarissa's verdict, and she, being a voracious reader of all the latest millinery-novels, had, as was well known in Otterton, a good taste in heroes; and, moreover, as the young ladies connected with Free St. John's admitted, she had a right to express a decided opinion as to the becomingness of the new minister's cloak, seeing that she got all her gowns tailor-made from Glasgow, and that her father—an extensive millowner—was universally acknowledged to be the most honourable of bankrupts, putting himself, as he did, with touching candour and an appropriate gospel sentiment, into the hands of his creditors on the occasions of his septennial failures.

Never had there been so many young and pretty aspirants for work in the field of Christian activity; and Norman was besieged, and indeed harassed, by requests to find something for them to do. He rather disgusted some of the more disingenuous of the damsels by his method of accepting their liberal offers to help him. He contrived to find work for them certainly—they could not complain of him in that particular—but he serenely ignored their prettily-hinted desires for his personal superintendence.

And it was rather provoking too that he could not be induced to dangle about their dainty drawing-rooms, in which religion walked in golden slippers to suit the refined tastes of the Mr. Hold-the-worlds and the Mr. By-ends who somehow or other had managed to step out of *The Pilgrim's Progress* into the church of Free

St. John's; and Miss Clarissa Bell told her dearest friend—in strict confidence—that Mr. Reid had a decided preference for dirty houses and badly-dressed people, and she was very much afraid that he had come of vulgar parentage, since his taste was so very low. 'One would think, to hear him speak, that everybody in a shabby gown was a saint in disguise!' said this sage young lady. 'He seems to believe that none but evil-doers walk in silk attire. I am sure that we require salvation too.' True, O Miss Clarissa! Get you to your Bible and your prayers.

How was it possible for such as she to understand the yearning and the sorrow that swelled the young minister's heart as he carried the gospel of Christ from day to day among the poor and needy of his flock? In his first sermon—his text was the eighteenth verse of the fourth chapter of St. Luke—'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,' etc.—he had plainly sounded forth the keynote of his ministry. His model was the weary and heavy-laden Christ, and his message was chiefly to the down-trodden and the sinful—to the reckless fathers who reeled about the streets, perhaps because they were afraid of some white-faced, wronged woman sitting among crying children in the desolate home; and to the slatternly mothers whose stunted lives oppressed his chivalrous heart; and to the little toddling children just beginning to lisp the devil's language while yet a faint reflex of heaven's own blue lingered in their eyes. These were Norman's chiefest care, and there is little wonder that he

seldom felt in trim for the luxurious drawing-rooms and the perfumed insipidity of the merely fashionable young ladies of the church.

But he had a band of willing Christian workers—strong young men not ashamed of the cause of Christ, pure-hearted maidens, unconsciously betraying that they had seen the Holy Grail, and many others in the church, both old and young, who helped him in his sacred labours.

The poor idolised him. Wherever he went kind greetings and silent blessings attended him, and not alone in preaching the gospel but in many practical ways did he seek to benefit them; for it was his firm belief that to win the souls of the ignorant and careworn people, one must in the first place minister to their bodily necessities.

One project lay very near his heart. He had been painfully struck by the great amount of aimless lounging at street corners indulged in by the men and boys of the Waterside more especially, and he had a strong desire to get a building suitable for a working men's club in the vicinity of that quarter.

With this project in his mind he one Saturday afternoon crossed the Otter to the house of Mr. Morgan, who was the largest employer of labour in the district.

It was a sunny afternoon in May, and, as he entered the pleasant avenue of beeches leading to the mansion, his eye rested with a sense of refreshing coolness on the crisp young foliage shaking itself free from the protecting bronze sheaths, which fell in soft showers to the grass at every breath of the west wind.

He passed by the parterres gay with tulips and rhododendron clumps, and, after ascending the sweeping steps with their ivy-clad stone balustrades, he rang the bell and was at once admitted into the dining-room, where sat the master of the house, evidently just awakened from a nap.

He greeted Norman with marked affability, for he took some pains to show his good-will towards the young minister; but the latter, on this as on every other occasion on which he came into contact with his ruling elder, had to fight against an inexplicable feeling of antipathy towards him.

Norman had often taken himself to task for this, and had tried in vain to account for it; but the fact remained that he often had to curb an unmistakable tendency to oppose through sheer contradictoriness some of the many elaborate schemes for the good of the church propounded by Mr. Morgan.

Norman had plenty of common sense, and, moreover, he was shrewd enough to see that a man like his ruling elder must be either friend or foe; for Mr. Morgan had a somewhat tyrannical energy of will, and, although his views were often narrow and his self-conceit always boundless, he was a liberal benefactor to the church and, as far as Norman could judge, a just and good man.

Norman strove, therefore, to keep his own somewhat imperious personality in subjection, and was fain to content himself with seconding many proposals for the benefit of the church, which, curiously enough, had pre-

sented themselves originally to his own mind in his private meditations. He found indeed, with a sense of puzzled surprise, that his mind was an unwilling echo of Mr. Morgan's, and to a man of Norman's independent judgment there was something startling and repellent in this phenomenon.

It is, of course, no uncommon thing for two men who have studied one subject to arrive at the same conclusions; but to Norman it was a matter of intense surprise to find his mind the *Doppelgänger* of a man towards whom he entertained a real though apparently groundless aversion.

However, he unfolded his scheme for the Waterside Club, and—for once—he discovered that his idea was entirely original!

Mr. Morgan rose from his easy-chair and stood in front of the fire with a frown upon his face.

'You are a new-comer, Mr. Reid,' he said, 'and of course cannot be expected to know the calibre of the working men belonging to the foundries and the factories. They are a discontented lot—always grumbling against their employers and stirring up strife. Just the other day, for instance, it came to my knowledge that the formation of a Trade's Union among my men was being vainly attempted, and this state of matters has been brought about by the senseless talk of a young fellow calling himself a Socialist.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Norman. 'I heard him lecturing to the men one Saturday afternoon about a fortnight ago.'

'You *heard* him?' said Mr. Morgan with very mani-

fest displeasure. 'You don't mean to tell me that you stopped to listen to him!'

Norman flushed high with resentment.

'Certainly I did. Why not? It is true that I got wedged into the crowd before I was aware; but I certainly stopped to hear what he had got to say.'

'But, my dear sir, think of the construction that may be put upon your procedure! Think of the example you thus showed!'

'Mr. Morgan,' replied Norman with some heat, 'is a minister to be a walking automaton with neither ears nor eyes of any use to him? I think you forget yourself to use such expressions regarding my conduct. I was naturally anxious to know of anything that was absorbing the thoughts of the people I had come among. That was my sole reason for listening to this — Jim Borland, I think they called him.'

'He is a pestilent fellow!' exclaimed Mr. Morgan, striding about the room in his agitation. 'He has been in America lately, and has returned cram full of this fad. His father is my foreman moulder, and an eminently sensible and serviceable man, and he tells me that he has warned his son over and over again against so recklessly perverting the minds of the workmen. I would soon put a stop to his mischief-making, but I am not prepared to go to extremes. The truth is that he is the inventor of a valuable machine that I wish to buy from him. But let me once get it into my hands and the fellow shall march. Just imagine his presumption!—a

mere mechanic, a poor lad brought up in the work! Why, I have heard that my father used to thrash him for his impertinent prying about the foundry when he was a boy!'

It occurred to Norman that the young man would probably pay off these old scores—and any new ones besides that might need settling—in a manner not contemplated by Mr. Morgan. He rose silently and held out his hand.

'Then I need not count on your support regarding my club?' he said stiffly.

At this moment the dining-room door was opened, and Clara Porteous, who was unaware of the presence of a visitor, entered the room.

Norman gave an uncontrollable start of surprise, and Clara turned very pale as their eyes met.

Mr. Morgan, who was preoccupied and angry still, and who, moreover, was too self-centred to be very penetrating, saw nothing in the embarrassing situation beyond the natural hesitancy of two strangers meeting thus unexpectedly. He hastened to put Clara at her ease by leading her forward with the intention of introducing her to the young minister.

'You need not trouble to introduce us, uncle,' she said in a low voice. 'Mr. Reid and I are already acquainted.'

She bowed gravely to Norman and held out her hand, which he clasped as in a dream.

'You did not expect to see *me* at Otterton,' she said with a smile. She had the advantage of him inasmuch as she had expected sooner or later to be brought face

to face with him, while he had never dreamed of meeting her thus.

Norman had some difficulty in retaining his self-possession, for her familiar face, dearer than ever in his eyes, moved him profoundly. He could but wonder at her womanly tact as he murmured some commonplace reply.

'You did not tell me that you knew Mr. Reid, my dear?' said her uncle inquiringly.

'No. You know that I have been trying, at your desire, to forget my old life. But I must apologise for coming into the dining-room. I would not have interrupted you if I had known there was any one with you,' she said, crossing over to the window and sitting down composedly. But Norman knew that her composure was a mask to conceal her agitation, and again he made a movement to go.

'You came at an opportune moment, Clara,' said her uncle with a smile. 'Mr. Reid and I were getting on dangerous ground. What! must you really go? But I daresay you are anxious to get back to your study—Saturday is a busy day with ministers. In that case we won't detain you. Nobody knows better than I that there must be a constant preparation and tending of the vineyard, although we must never forget that "neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase,"' said Mr. Morgan, accompanying Norman to the door.

The dragged-in text disgusted the young minister even in the midst of the tumultuous emotions awakened by

Clara's unexpected appearance, and as he walked homeward by the rippling Otter, sparkling in the mystic silver glory of a Shekinah under the cloudless sunshine, he was half inclined to suspect that the sap of sincerity had long since evaporated from the choice and applicable texts which rolled so glibly upon occasion from the lips of his ruling elder. He found himself puzzling over the old problem of his unconquerable antipathy towards him. Could it be because of an instinctive feeling that the ruling elder was a hypocrite? But he shook the thought from him and again took himself to task for his lack of charity.

I wonder what Norman would have thought of a certain nightly ceremony which was as piously observed as household prayers in the home of the ruling elder? Would it have filled him with remorse for his hard thoughts, or would it have given them a more vivid life? For after Mr. Morgan was securely alone for the night, he might have been seen bending over an escritoire which stood in a corner of his bed-chamber, and lifting out of its secret recess, with hands that lingered lovingly over the act, a tiny miniature of a spirited woman's face, richly framed in purple velvet. He might have been seen gazing with tenderest love upon the pictured feminine face whose brilliant eyes met his own with smiling frankness as he stooped to kiss the proud arch of the ruby lips before returning the miniature to its secret resting-place. Was it an act of penance, or was it a nightly offering to the memory of some ancient sentiment?

But Norman knew nothing of this as he mused on his unsatisfactory relations with Mr. Morgan, and soon the subject was dismissed from his thoughts as the image of Clara presented itself, adding a new element to his uneasiness.

How did she come to be living so familiarly there? Surely he had heard her call Mr. Morgan 'uncle'? Ah! he recollected how on that first Friday after his coming to Otterton he had met Mr. Morgan at the station on his way to see a friend who had had an accident in Edinburgh. It must have been Clara's father; but that did not altogether explain her presence in Otterton, unless, indeed, her father being dead now, she had seen how difficult it was to pursue her art in poverty and alone and had come to live in Otterton with her uncle. Strange that she had not told him of this uncle in Otterton! But she was here; and at the thought Norman's heart beat quickly. Clara was here! Day after day she would be here! How passing strange that they should meet thus! and he looked up with a thrill of gladness as he took to himself a delightful sense of comfort from the thought that the same bit of sunny sky arched over both their heads.



CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD STORY.

O waly, waly, but love is bonnie
A little time while it is new !—*Scotch Ballad.*

'KATIE,' said Norman as his faithful housekeeper was serving his solitary dinner on the evening of the day upon which he had met Clara at her uncle's house, 'I have had a great surprise to-day. I have discovered that Miss Porteous is at present staying here with her uncle, Mr. Morgan.'

'Mr. Morgan! Her uncle!' exclaimed Katie with a strange expression on her face. 'I heard tell that a young lady was stayin' with him for her health, but I never thocht it could be oor Miss Clara. Her uncle, is he?'

'Yes, so it appears,' replied Norman musingly, while Katie was so much confused apparently by the intelligence that she paused in the very act of helping Norman to a further supply of potatoes.

'But, dearie me!' said she, recovering herself with a start; 'I thocht that she had no freends o' her ain? I've

heard your mother say so. It's a very queer thing to think that her uncle is—livin' here,' concluded Katie lamely.

'I am inclined to think that she herself was ignorant of that fact till very lately,' said Norman. 'It is possible that Clara did not know of it until about the time of her father's death.' He then told Katie of his conclusions regarding his meeting with Mr. Morgan at the station. 'I never heard her say that her mother's name was Morgan, but she always seemed to me to be very reticent about her mother's friends.'

'Maybe she had guid reasons,' said Katie meaningly. 'But she's aye been a very close young leddy. I didna think, though, that she would have kept her comin' here a secret from *you*, Norman.'

'Katie,' said he hesitatingly, 'our engagement is broken off. Clara thought—that is— In short, it would be as well that nobody in Otterton should know anything about Miss Porteous through you. I am almost certain that her uncle knows nothing about our former—friendship.'

It cost Norman a good deal to tell Katie this, especially as she stood before him with her small figure set stiffly upright, with arms akimbo and a look of angry amazement upon her face.

'Dinna be feared that *I'll* clash the affairs o' this hoose. Eh, lad, when did ye ever hear tell o' auld Katie turnin' toon-crier?'

'Don't be angry, Katie,' Norman remonstrated. 'But I have reason to believe that Miss Porteous would be hurt if anything was known about our past engagement.

'If I thocht that she had lichtlied ye!' exclaimed Katie indignantly.

'No, no, Katie. It can't be helped, and just keep our secret.'

'Oh, I'll do that—though mony ane spiers at me if the new minister's engaged to be married. Fine ken I what way the leddy visitors smile on auld Katie when they come to the Manse door. But, laddie, laddie, you're such a simple chield that you will fa' into their clutches *noo*.'

'Nonsense, Katie! I thought you had more sense.'

'Sense! I maun credit the testimony o' my een. There's anither pair o' slippers come the day, and that makes the fifth pair in as mony weeks; what does that mean, unless the leddies think ye a Jenny-hunder-feet?' said Katie triumphantly. 'And that chicken on the table cam' this mornin' with a bit text tied round the leg o't. 'Od, it spoke to *me* as plain as Balaam's ass. "Ye dinna need to want a wife," quo' the chuckie!'

Norman laughed, but he felt rather uncomfortable.

'Come, come, Katie. You know very well that it is just the hospitable west-country way of these ladies. They want to make me feel at home among them.'

'Umphm!' said Katie. 'But it was aye a puzzle to me to think what women-folk can see in ministers—ministers and sodgers. But I'm no' sayin' but what there may be blind guid sense at the bottom o' their fancy for ministers;—they'll aiblins fancy them nearer heaven than ither men; and, mind ye, Norman, they should be, they ought to be, reading the Buik so much and comin' nearer to the mind o' God than ither folk.'

'That's true, Katie,' said Norman gravely as he rose from the table, 'and our responsibility is all the greater on that account. Has Adam Auld been here to-night?'

It was Adam's usual custom to come to the Manse every Saturday evening for the purpose of getting the numbers of the psalms which were to be sung on the Sabbath, and giving them to the precentor whose duty it was to find suitable tunes for them.

'No, not yet,' said Katie, removing the dishes; 'he's an aff-pittin' body.'

Norman rapidly jotted the selected verses down on a slip of paper and gave it to Katie.

'Ask him how his blind niece is, will you? I've half an idea that her blindness might be cured. I wonder if Adam would allow me to bring Dr. Neaves to see her when he comes to spend his vacation with me? Do you know if she has ever had medical advice?'

'No, I dinna ken. Auld Adam would be a proud man if Mysie won back her sight.'

'Well, don't unsettle his mind about the matter yet, Katie. I may be wrong in thinking that her sight can be restored. Just tell him that I am coming to see Mysie very soon. Now, Katie, don't let me be disturbed to-night if you can help it,' said Norman as he proceeded to his study.

Katie, as was her custom, had a long and confidential talk with herself as she sat sewing in her trim kitchen after the little maid who did the rougher work of the house had gone home for the night; and the result was that she took the pen in her unaccustomed hand and

wrote a letter to her absent mistress, which, when it reached that lady, caused her much perturbation and uneasy thought. Katie did not finish her letter that night, however, for her laborious pen halted at the sound of Adam Auld's modest tapping at the kitchen door.

'Come in,' said Katie graciously, for she had a special reason for desiring a chat with Adam to-night.

He entered, with his straw hat in one hand and in the other a bunch of early rhubarb.

'Dear me, Mr. Auld, I thocht the roads would hae been clean this bonnie nicht,' said Katie, looking pointedly at Adam's dusty boots. 'But men-folk aye carry in a' the dirt that's gaun.'

Adam looked sheepishly at his feet and carefully drew them to and fro along the door-mat.

'Hoots, never mind! they'll do noo, surely. Dinna rub the mat clean through the floor. You're no' so bad as Borland, your worthy brither-in-law. *He* disna come to the kitchen door o' the Manse. Nothing but the front door will serve *him*, and the last time he was in the minister's study he left as muckle snuff on the table-cover as would hae killed every moth in the country-side. I shook it ower the window afore his very face, and, if you'll believe me, ye might hae heard the wind sneezin' as it flew by. Hoo's Mysie?'

Adam had meekly collapsed under the rapid avalanche of talk. He now recovered, and, with the rhubarb held forth as a peace-offering, said,—

'She's fine, and she telt me to bring ye a tastin' o' the

first o' the rhubarb. It's no' ready in the Manse garden yet, ye ken.'

'An' that's a mystery to me, seein' that ye have the charge o' baith oor grund an' your ain,' said Katie with a caustic smile. 'But it's bonnie rhubarb, and I'm obliged to Mysie and you.'

'You're very welcome,' said Adam with a sigh of relief, for he stood rather in awe of Katie's unsparing tongue.

'Did ye ken that Morgan has a young leddy bidin' wi' him?' said Katie with assumed indifference.

'Ay, I saw her yestreen; but she's been here for some weeks, I hear. She's his niece—a bonnie lass, but white and sickly. She was ill a while after she cam' here,' said Adam. 'They say that Morgan has ta'en her hame because her father is dead. He can do kind things when it comes up his ain back. The lassie's mither was his only sister.'

'I didna ken he had a sister.'

'Oh, it's an auld story,' rejoined Adam, venturing to cross his legs in a more comfortable attitude.

'Let's hear it, Mr. Auld, if ye please. I hae leisure for a crack the nicht,' said Katie in her most gracious manner.

'Weel, this Miss Morgan was a silly young thing at the boardin'-schule when she ran awa' wi' the drawin'-master o' the concern. There was a bonnie rumpus anent the business, I can tell you, for auld Mrs. Morgan was a prood madam and had ither views for her ae dochter.'

'That's a queer story,' said Katie, sewing busily. 'The boardin'-schule hadna been sair conducted if a young lass found time to think aboot lads and sic trash.'

'Oh, they find plenty of time for *that!*' said Adam, nettled at Katie's contemptuous notice of his kind. 'And they're but silly things, young lassies. This drawin'-master—Porteous his name was—wad hae nae mair ado, I'll warrant, but jist gie a beckon o' his hand and a glint o' his ee, and aff she wad gang'—

'Haud your tongue!' cried Katie, 'and dinna deave me wi' your nonsense. Tell your story strecht forrit.'

'Weel, weel; Porteous was a wiselike fellow, and the lass didna need muckle priggin'. She cam' doon at his ca' as easy as I'll cut the grass on a dewy mornin''—

'There ye go, Adam Auld!'

'Weel, she was a bonnie, licht-heided thing, puir thing, and she thocht it fine to rin awa' frae the schule, and get married aff-hand. Syne the pair cam' here to the auld folk, and doon on their knees they fell'—

'And hoo ken ye that?' said Katie grimly.

'That's what aye happens, I'm telt,' replied Adam, nothing daunted. 'I like to keep to nature, Mrs. Lawson. Doon on their knees they bode to hae gaen, wi' a "Forgie us, and we'll be guid bairns." But what does auld madam do but up and turn upon them and forbid them the house in spite o' her canny guidman! But the mistress was made o' iron, and oot o' the house she drove them wi' her insults, and never did she see her bonnie young dochter's face again.'

'The hard-hearted woman!' exclaimed Katie, while her sewing dropped forgotten to the floor.

'Ay, ye may weel say that. Her ae dochter, and her but a young thing, inveigled into a marriage wi' a fellow that turned oot a scamp, they say. I've heard that the lassie wrote letters to her mither, and to her father and brither as weel, but the mistress burned them wi' her ain hand. She had her ain way o' lookin' at the thing, ye see, for she was a prood woman, and she was sair affronted wi' her silly dochter—no' to speak o' a feckless man and a wild son.'

'Ay? a wild son, say ye?' Katie said with a keen look.

'Weel,' said Adam with a grin, 'he wasna exactly the perfect Christian character he's been sinsyne. Some folk said that when he was awa' in the North in his young days he gaed his length.'

'Whaur was he at the time o' his sister's marriage?'

'He was abroad—but that's a wide and convenient word. It's ane-and-twenty years syne, and we needna rake up his past. It will be ten years since he cam' hame, but folk say that he left a wife ahint him.'

'Folk are unco fond o' a clash,' said Katie serenely, rising as she spoke. 'Here's the psalms, Adam, and gie Mysie my best respects. I'll need to be gettin' things in order for the morn noo.'

'Weel, I'll awa',' said Adam, rising stiffly and rubbing his knees with a careful hand. 'Guid-nicht, Mrs. Lawson.'

Katie sat still a long time after his departure, and her

face would have puzzled the shrewdest of physiognomists by its conflicting changes of expression.

She drew forth her letter and carefully re-read it with many nods and half audible remarks; but she was too tired to finish it that night, and it was not until the following Monday that it was satisfactorily concluded and sent off to Mentone.





CHAPTER XIV.

MOTHER AND SON.

Forget the dead, the past? Oh yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it;
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets that glide through the spirit's gloom.

SHELLEY.

A FEW days after Katie's letter had reached its destination, Norman received one from his mother which caused him some uneasiness. She stated that she was suffering from the heat which had suddenly become too intense and relaxing to permit of her remaining much longer at Mentone, and she begged him therefore to come to her as soon as he conveniently could, so that they might decide where she should spend the summer months, for she did not feel strong enough to take up her immediate abode in a town so noisy and smoky as she understood Otterton to be.

Norman fancied that the letter was somewhat constrained in tone, and, moreover, he was much disappointed that she could not come at once to Otterton. He saw plainly enough, however, that she was really ill; so, after

making hasty arrangements for the supply of his pulpit and the visiting of the sick, he left for Mentone.

When he arrived he found his mother feverishly anxious to get to Rothesay, where in the interval she had resolved to go. She fancied that its mild and salubrious air would just suit her, and at the same time it was within easy reach of Otterton so that Norman might occasionally visit her for a day or two; and thus she would regain something of the home feeling that she had so sadly missed and yearned for all these past months.

Norman was alarmed at her haggard appearance, and he suspected that she had some cause for mental disquietude. Such apparently groundless paroxysms of restlessness and perturbation were not uncommon in her invalid life, but Norman had reason to believe that his mother brooded over a secret trouble until the mood reached its periodical crisis in an access of bodily illness.

He therefore soothed her as he so well knew how to do, and lost no time in gratifying her sick whim—as he considered it — of going to Rothesay instead of to Otterton.

They travelled by easy stages, and on the afternoon of a lovely May day they landed on Rothesay pier.

It did not take Norman long to procure suitable lodgings, and Mrs. Reid expressed her pleasure at finding herself in the possession of rooms whence she could obtain a view of 'sweet Rothesay Bay.'

Let us glance for a moment at Norman's mother as she sits resting after tea in a low chair by the window opposite her tall son.

That she was no mere commonplace matron whose uneventful days had been filled with the joys and sorrows of ordinary domestic life, was abundantly evident; rather was she one of those slightly forbidding human beings of whom we vaguely surmise that they have 'a history,' by which we mean that some exceptional experience or inner tragedy has left its secret visible, yet undecipherable, upon their countenances.

Mrs. Reid was apparently about forty-five years of age. Her face, which was framed in a cap of delicate lace almost hiding the soft brown hair slightly sprinkled with grey, was still sweet and comely, although ill-health had bereft it of its bloom, and sorrow had furrowed it deeply; but her eyes were bright yet, and in their lucid brown depths there dwelt a brave and quiet vigilance which showed that her spirit had not been crushed beneath her secret burden, whatever it was.

The light flashed upon her white and jewelled hands as she leaned back in the low rocking-chair, and her rich gown of lustreless black silk rustled softly as now and again she set the chair in motion with her silent foot.

There was no apparent resemblance between this mother and son; the likeness, if any, was other and deeper than that of mere outward form and expression.

The mother's face, moreover, was small and delicately featured, and this lent a fictitious air of youth to her which was further accentuated by the graceful fragility of her figure; while her son's massive outline of head and strongly-marked features combined with his stalwart

form to make him look older than his four-and-twenty years warranted.

'Mother,' said Norman in a pause of the brisk dialogue of question and answer which had been going on, for they had much to say to each other after their long separation, 'how glad I am that at last I can take care of *you!* All my life you have been taking care of me, but now the tables are turned, and you are soon coming home with me, and you shall sit in the easiest chair and look happy and gracious, and do nothing at all but rest and enjoy yourself. I am very thankful that at last I am able in some small measure to repay you for the many sacrifices you have made that I might be educated for the ministry. Your priceless love I can never repay.'

'Nonsense; you must not talk of repaying me. Mother's love never counts the cost, Norman,' said she with a smile. 'But what is all this between Clara and you? Your letters were rather unsatisfactory, and I only gathered from them that your engagement was at an end because she found that marriage would interfere with her pursuit of art; that seemed to me a very unique reason to be given by a woman for breaking off an engagement!'

'It is just as I told you, mother; but I do not despair of making her my wife. If you would but come very soon to Otterton, perhaps you could talk over the affair with her. She is not like other girls—she is a little peculiar in some things. Did I tell you that she is at present staying at Otterton?'

'I know. Katie told me that she was staying there with her newly-found uncle, Mr. Morgan.'

'Katie told you!' said Norman in surprise.

'Yes,' replied his mother calmly. 'She lately wrote me "a full, true, and particular account" of all that was going on at Otterton. I found it a very good and needful supplement to your letters. By the way, what sort of a man is this Mr. Morgan?'

'Oh, he is a domineering fellow! I can't say I care much for him, but he appears to be very favourably disposed towards me in the meantime. He is a man of wealth and position in the town, and he is very liberal to the church. He is the owner of Otterbank Foundry, and employs about five hundred men;—but surely I have told you all this in my letters? I suppose that Katie would tell you the romantic story she told me about the runaway marriage of Clara's parents and the discovery of Clara by her uncle? I am glad that she has found such a good home. Her uncle is very proud of her, I can see, and, as he is unmarried, it is, of course, a great satisfaction to him to have found some one of his own kith and kin to enliven his big house and inherit his riches. He told me so himself— Why, mother! are you cold?' cried Norman, interrupting himself as he observed that she shivered and drew a large white shawl about her shoulders. 'I shall ring for more coals. Let me lead you to this cosy nook by the fire. Why, your hand is as cold as ice! What a chilly old dame you are, to be sure!' he cried with solicitous kindness, for his mother was very dear to him.

'You will be chilly too after a tiresome journey of several days when you are as old as I am,' she said playfully as he knelt on the rug and stirred the fire into a warmer glow. He then rang the bell, and after the fire had been replenished and the maid had withdrawn, Mrs. Reid stretched her hands towards the leaping flames and said with some hesitation of manner, 'Norman —Norman, I want you to make me a promise.'

'Well, mother?'

'Promise me that you will on no account, no matter how much you may be provoked, quarrel with this Mr. Morgan.'

Norman looked at his mother in amazement; and he observed upon her face a look of painfully suppressed emotion, which he had long ago learned to dread.

'That is a strange request, mother. What is your reason for asking me to promise you that?'

'I cannot tell you—yet. Only trust me, my son. I have an all-sufficient reason for exacting this strange promise from you.'

'But I don't see any necessity for promising. Why should there be any occasion for quarrelling with Mr. Morgan? I am not a fire-eater by any means, mother. I am not at all likely to bring the cause of Christ into disrepute in such a fashion. Do you know anything about this gentleman that leads you to think he is quarrelsome?'

'I know him,' she replied in a curious tone of constraint.

'Indeed! How strange! Why did you never tell me?' he said.

'Ask me no more to-night, Norman. Since I heard from your letters and from Katie that he lived at Otterton, I have been oppressed by many thoughts. Oh, my son, I am preparing myself for an ordeal which I never dreamed that I should have to face! Let that suffice until I disclose all—but love me and trust me, Norman; only love me and trust me.'

She stretched out her hand hysterically towards him, and he took the tremulous hand and carried it silently to his lips. Although he was much surprised, from his boyhood he had been accustomed to witness his mother's peculiar moods. Sometimes scattered words and hastily repented-of hints had been given him, and these had shadowed his thoughtful youth, for thereby he had learned to associate his mother's unhappiness with the name of the father whom he had never known.

He divined that something more tragic than the natural grief of widowhood lay in his mother's past and clouded her life. Was it dread? Was it wrong-doing? —He knew not; but as he sat with her in the fire-lit room of her Rothesay lodgings while the shadows of evening fell, he realised for the first time that the deeper shadows of that secret trouble might possibly touch him in a more threatening and personal manner than he had ever conceived they would.

A flood of compassion for his mother surged through his strong young heart. He drew near in the twilight and kissed her tenderly. 'Oh, mother,' he said, 'I will trust you. I love you, my own mother, and nothing shall ever come between us—nothing; and if it is any

comfort to you to get my promise that I will not quarrel with Mr. Morgan, you have it, mother dear.' And she sobbed hysterically as she kissed him again and again.

Norman stayed a few days longer at Rothesay; then, having seen his mother comfortably settled, he returned to Otterton.





CHAPTER XV.

BLIND MYSIE.

There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime.

A FEW weeks after his return from Rothesay, Norman sought Adam Auld's little cottage, which now stood embowered in green, a very inviting rest and refuge from the glare of the sun-baked streets through which Norman had just taken his way.

Adam, as usual, was in his garden, pottering about among the multitudinous growths in which his soul delighted. He cultivated early vegetables with a practical eye to the main chance, and at this season of the year when lusty cabbages were elbowing each other, and seedling turnips demanding more abundant room for the survival of the fittest of their race, and the soldierly rows of peas, aflutter with butterfly blossoms, were beginning to send adventurous tendrils beyond the safe prison of their fir-bough supports, and the parsley was a perfect jungle of crisp greenness;—when, in short, the whole

garden had an air of overgrown luxuriance that sorely tried Adam's ingenuity to find space for his various treasures, he was apt to wax impatient over Mysie's 'unprofitably gay' flower-borders, and even to harbour a grudge against the crooked laburnum trees that drooped their golden tresses over the deadly-fair purple blooms of the potato patch.

'What's the use o' them, Mysie?' he would ask. 'If the flower was followed by ony fruit that's guid to eat and no' by poisonous pea-pods to tempt careless weans, there wad be some sense in lettin' them grow.'

To which Mysie would reply, 'The laburnum pods are o' some use, ye needna doot, since God makes naething in vain, and I like to think about the bonnie yellow flowers I canna see,'—a rejoinder which always left Adam remorsefully tender of the smallest twig of the laburnums for Mysie's sake, even although she sometimes playfully pressed her advantage by saying, 'Laburnum's a bonnie flower, uncle, and gies pleasure to the ee; no' but what I ken fine what you'll say to that! But I needna speak, for weel I ken that ye never looked on a field of barley ripenin' in the sun without thinkin' on the price the grain wad bring.'

So year after year the laburnums grew and made a dappled shade in the midst of the garden, holding their own with the lichened apple-trees that showered their rosy snow of blossom to grace the 'bridal of the earth and sky.'

Adam glanced over the sweet-brier hedge separating

his garden from the dusty road, and saw the minister approaching with a somewhat listless step and downcast eyes; for in truth Norman, having been visiting in some of the most squalid quarters of the town, was feeling with unusual keenness the responsibility of his office. He had come into contact with the old, old mystery of suffering; he had sickened in soul and body amid the pollution and unblushingness of sin; and he was feeling how impossible it was for him, except through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, to do anything to lighten the care, the sorrow, the 'burden of the mystery,' which seemed to dog the steps of the children of 'this unintelligible world.'

With a prayer in his heart he had come forth into the sunlit streets, and the cool green garden by the roadside was to him a veritable pleasant Arbour on the side of the Hill Difficulty.

Adam stuck his spade in the ground and went forward to meet him, mumbling to himself, 'Ay, ay. His heid is hingin', and that's a sign that he is heavy-hearted; but I've heard tell that he carries a hantle o' thocht in that same heid o' his. It's the barren tree that lifts its branches to the cluds, for it hasna a crop o' bonnie rosy apples to keep it near the ground;—*he's* nae barren tree.'

'Hoo are ye the day, Mr. Reid? It's a fine growin' day.'

'A fine day, Adam; and how is your rheumatism?'

''Od, I canna compleen,' answered Adam, as if he would

have done so had it been at all possible. 'You'll be for comin' in to see Mysie?'

'Yes. I have been thinking, Adam, that she ought to get the opinion of an oculist about her eyes. It is possible that her sight might be restored, and I have a friend—Doctor Neaves—who is very skilful; so, as he is coming to spend part of his vacation with me, I thought that it would be a good opportunity to get his opinion about Mysie. It won't put you to any expense, you know, Adam,' said Norman kindly.

'Eh, man, I wadna mind the expense, if it was but possible that my Mysie could get her sicht again!' exclaimed Adam with a light of gladness on his weather-beaten face. 'My bonnie Mysie! To think that I may yet see her walkin' aboot and lookin' at the flowers and the sky, and a'thing, jist as she was wont to do! If your freend can gie my lassie back her sicht, I'll be his and your debtor for life. We'll gang to her and see what she says.'

He walked briskly by Norman's side for a few moments along the mossy path, but when he came in sight of the cottage door he stopped with a look of dismay.

'But what am I to do aboot my wig and a' the rest o' the lees I telt her, to keep her frae thinkin' that I was growin' auld and stiff?' he said.

'Your wig?' inquired Norman in a puzzled tone as he looked at the bushy red appendage sticking out from under the old man's battered straw hat.

'Ay. I'm an auld fule, I ken, but I couldna bear her

to ken I was grey, because she was sae prood o' my hair bein' the same colour as her ain; and sae I was obleeged to get a red wig to ease my conscience when she spiered if my hair was as bonnie as ever. It was Jessie Borland put me up to that dodge.'

Norman smiled. 'How long has she been blind?' he said as they resumed their walk.

'It's a matter o' five years since first she began to compleen o' her een being dim; but it's aboot twa years since she gaed stane-blind. There she stands i' the porch, and Jessie Borland wi' her.'

They drew near and made their presence known to Mysie, who turned softly towards them with a smile.

'The garden is lovely just now,' said Norman, 'and the breeze is very refreshing after one has come through the hot streets.'

'Ay, Mr. Reid,' said Mysie; 'it's a bonnie lown wastlin' wind. It minds me o' the Spirit o' God—that wind that bloweth "where it listeth." I kent it was your foot on the walk, sir, and I ken noo what like ye look, thanks to Jessie here.'

Norman turned to Jessie with a smile. He wondered a little what manner of man he appeared in those shrewd bright eyes, but she shrank behind her blind cousin with a painful blush when she found his gaze upon her.

The two girls made an attractive picture as they stood within the rustic porch, surrounded by the young foliage of the budding pink roses that clambered over

the trellis-work and sent daring sprays of waving green to nod against the soft azure of the sunny sky. Mysie stood full in the sunlight, which shone upon her placid Madonna-like face and shining auburn hair, with a habitual touch of wistfulness in her delicate face; while Jessie, standing behind in the shade of the porch, looked half-shyly, half-defiantly at the minister out of large eyes whose deep blue colour contrasted strangely with her abundant nut-brown tresses and poppy bloom.

'Come in, sir,' said Mysie, hospitably leading the way. 'Jessie and I were busy re-potting the resurrection-plants.'

'She means begonias,' interrupted Adam, waving Norman towards the easy-chair by the window, while he sank slowly into the depths of his own and spread his blue-checked handkerchief over his knees—a proceeding which Jessie with a silent laugh noted from her corner near the door.

'Begonias may be the richt name,' said Mysie with a smile; 'but I like to ca' them resurrection-plants, because they dee awa' at the fa' o' the year and come up frae their grave when they feel the spring-time comin'. Ilka plant rises frae a wee pink dot and grows leaf by leaf, joint by joint, until it fills a' the window wi' its bonnie leaf and blossom. It teaches me mony a lesson when I see it risin' so slow and sure.'

Norman observed with a thrill of sympathetic pity that Mysie unconsciously spoke of *seeing* the plant.

'What does it teach you?' he asked gently.

'First o' a'—faith. That's the wee pink tip that ventured aboon the earth; and ilka leaf is faith's renewal and triumph, until at last the bonnie red flowers are oot on the top of the plant—and that's my croon o' glory.'

'But the flower will fa',' said Jessie in a loud whisper.

'Ay, lassie; and then my plant speaks to me o' the idols o' the flesh that we sae often put in God's ain place, and as the leaves begin to fa' joint by joint, I say to myself, "Oh, there gangs anither earthly pleasure, there gangs anither earthly prop, to mak' me lean on God alane; and last o' a', the hale plant disappears, and that's death until the resurrection morn." But there! I'm preachin' to *you*, sir, that should preach to us!' said Mysie with a silvery laugh.

'I am learning much from your lips,' replied Norman reverently. 'You live very near to heaven.'

'Jessie tells me that's because I am blind. The lassie says I hae a better chance o' being guid than folk that can see, but she little kens how often I rebel against the will o' the Lord.'

Adam had fallen asleep with his head against the wall, for he was wearied with his pleasant out-of-door labour, and the tiny kitchen was very quiet as Norman leaned thoughtfully back in his chair, wondering inly at the refinement and gracious calm of the blind girl, and—minister though he was—envying her her simple faith.

He had frequently dropped in at the cottage for the sake of a talk about holy things with Mysie, and he had discovered that her blindness was no darkness to her,

but was rather an illumination of faith to all who came under the influence of her unfailing cheerfulness, her stainless purity, and her sweet charity.

Such a character as hers was unique in its sacred helplessness, and it was no uncommon thing for the penitent and sorrowful to come to her for sympathy in the troubles and sins from which her blindness shielded her. This freedom from the outer world of sight gave her

> A heart at leisure from itself,
> To soothe and sympathize ;

and she imparted to many who had eyes only for external things something of the bright unselfishness of her own spiritual vision.

It was a rest to Norman thus to spend an hour in the little cottage, and Mysie, who by this time had learned to know his ways, understood the long silences which were apt to fall upon him.

But to-day he found Jessie's presence something of a distracting element. He had met her once or twice in the cottage, and he had seen her flitting by with the stream of workers at meal-hours, for she was a dress-maker in a large establishment in Queen Street, and he had also observed her wistfully looking up to him from her father's pew in church on the Sabbath day ; but he had never been able to exchange with her more than the conventional courtesies of greeting in spite of the fact that, whenever he encountered the gaze of her large blue eyes, he vaguely felt as if she were demanding something from him. What was it ? Was it guidance

in the narrow way? Was it help or advice in some personal perplexity?

Perhaps the wayward girl — for he knew from old Adam, her uncle, that she was very wayward—was anxious for spiritual instruction. In that case, surely her companionship with Mysie would be of benefit to her.

He looked at her as she leaned carelessly against the old-fashioned clock, and again he found her eyes fixed upon his face. He did not know that to Jessie he was the veritable embodiment of the goodness for which her soul longed. He would have shrunk, humble and abashed, if he had known with what reverent thoughts she regarded him; for the poor girl, ever tossed hither and thither by tempestuous feeling, discerned in Norman a strength tempered by gentleness, which charmed her into gravity and made her eyes shine with the desire that that strength might help and that gentleness lead *her* upon the heavenly way.

If he had known something of her home life he would have been able to account for the habitual look of dissatisfaction in her face, for Jessie was always more or less under the depressing influence of a sense of general wrong doing.

Her mother was a spiritless, delicate woman, engrossed with the management of her younger children, and to her Jessie with her vigorous life and restless disposition was a constant irritation and trial.

Her elder brother Jim openly scoffed at her impulsive escapades and religious longings, while her father treated

her with a sternness which chilled her warm heart into fear.

Moreover, poor childlike Jessie had the strong meat of religion thrust down her throat in the dreary family worship conducted by her father, who held strictly Calvinistic views anent the doctrines of original sin and predestination. He dinned into the ears of his children his belief that childhood and youth were one long strife of wicked and perverse fighting against goodness.

His son had long ago openly revolted and would not attend family worship, but for Jessie no such independent action was possible; and so it came about that life for her was a series of disheartening backslidings on the much-desired road to God, alternating with tearful, passionate vows of impossible goodness.

It sometimes happened that, after perpetrating some not very heinous 'sin,' she would approach her father with a burst of inconvenient penitence, and the oft-repeated cry, 'I'll be a guid lass, father! only dinna look at me like *that*.' But, thoroughly repelled by her passionate moods, he almost invariably thrust her aside with the cold answer, 'Ye aye say that, Jessie;—"the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Pray for a better heart if ye wadna be lost through a' eternity.' Let us hope that it was his want of imagination and not heartlessness that made him send one of Christ's little ones thus empty away.

But as she had grown older, she had begun in her heart to rebel. She was gradually becoming hardened under

her father's rigid creed, and the consequence was that, —as a plant which, being denied its natural aliment, instinctively seeks its way through many grotesque and unnatural contortions towards the light—she sought by various methods of which her father totally disapproved to find food for her hungry soul.

She attended revival meetings for miles round—to her brother Jim's great disgust; and she lived as a rule in a morbidly unhealthy atmosphere of religious excitement.

But the hour in which she first heard Norman preach was to her very memorable. She was attracted, too, by his large-hearted, sympathetic personality, and she became an eager listener to all he said. She absorbed the spiritual aliment of his preaching, and her soul grew like a rush in the rainy spring, as with fear and trembling hope she took heart again to tread the narrow way.

Norman was quite unconscious of all this as he sat in the little cottage kitchen and listened to Mysie's gentle voice. But suddenly Jessie glanced at the clock, and, with a shy nod to Norman, slipped up to her sleeping uncle, and, giving his cheek a mischievous pinch which awoke him with a start, she hastened away.

Norman was very much amused, for there sat Adam ruefully rubbing his cheek, with many apologies for falling asleep interspersed with sharp comments upon 'that tricky lassie's' behaviour. But suddenly he recollected the object of the minister's visit, and, sitting bolt upright, he anxiously inquired,—

'Hae ye telt her, sir?'

Norman thereupon unfolded his project for the recovery of Mysie's sight.

The blind girl heard him out patiently. Once or twice a flush passed over the marble pallor of her face, but she did not interrupt his explanation.

'Hae ye naething to say to the minister, Mysie?' asked Adam with some surprise.

'I thank him for his kind thochts o' me, but I wad rather be as I am,' said Mysie sadly. 'If it's the will o' the Lord, that's to say,' she added.

'Oh, lassie! wad ye no' like to see ance mair the bonnie earth and the sky that ye are sae fond o', and—and your auld uncle's face!' cried Adam with a gasp, remembering his wig.

'I do not know if your sight can be restored,' said Norman, 'but there can be no harm in consulting my friend. Will you not think over it for your uncle's sake?'

'You see,' she replied, 'I feel so safe and happy in my blindness that I'm feared to venture wi' my een open. I'm like as if I was dune wi' the warld, and could gie a' my thochts to dwellin' in the licht of God. I doot I wadna hae so much o' *that* licht if I could see like ither folk ance mair; for before I was blind I was as thochtless and vain a lassie'—

'Na, na, Mysie! Dinna believe her, sir!' expostulated Adam. 'She forgets.'

'Thochtless and vain and ta'en up wi' warldly affections,' continued Mysie, gently stroking her uncle's hand.

'And besides,'—she paused, and a blush mounted to her brow,—'there's Jim Borland, ye ken, uncle. He wad be wantin' me to wed mair than ever, puir lad, and I dinna care to gang back upon *that*.'

'Ye dinna need to tak' him! I wadna let ye marry sic a scoffer! I cannot understand ye, Mysie!' cried Adam in much distress. Mysie turned her sightless gaze upon Norman.

'Ye see, sir,' she said simply, 'we lo'e ilk ither, and I'm at rest frae a' thochts of marriage as lang as I am blind—my blindness is like a shield set by the hand o' God between Jim and me, for if I could see again—oh, I ken I wad be tempted to marry him, and so dishonour my faith! As long as I am blind, I can pray wi' an undivided heart for his conversion. That's my hidden hope, sir—Jim's conversion—and I hae kept it in my prayers mony and mony a day. But if ance I saw him —I fear, I fear that the auld glamour o' the carnal ee wad come ower me and I wad forget his soul's salvation first o' a'.'

'But your influence would still be upon him for good?' said Norman with emotion, while Adam listened with speechless astonishment.

'Yes; but it wadna be the same. As lang as I am blind I ken that I hae power wi' God; but maybe I wad lose it if I saw wi' warldly een. But I'll say nae mair until I have spiered God's will in the matter,' said Mysie, rising from her chair and leaving the kitchen to hide her emotion.

Norman stayed a few minutes to comfort Adam, who

was in great distress at the unexpected manner in which Mysie had received the minister's proposal. He had an idea that Jim Borland was at the bottom of it, but Mysie's frame of mind was a most entire and enigmatical surprise to him.

Norman had much food for thought as he walked along the garden path, dusky and sweet with overhanging lilacs. The blood tingled into his cheek as he felt with shame how much higher were the blind girl's motives than his. He would have his love at any cost; he thought of it apart from any higher consideration than that of the natural longing to possess the beloved. Ah, through what painful channels of purifying sorrow his love had yet to go! Such were his thoughts as he retraced his steps towards the town for the purpose of finishing his visitation in the squalid district which he had left but an hour ago in a sudden access of despair. But now, in the strength which he had gained in the cottage that enshrined saintly Mysie, he went forth once more to do battle against sin and suffering.

He paused on the steps of the post-office to allow a contingent of the Salvation Army—which was strong in Otterton—to file past.

On the processionists came, marching briskly with hearty singing and waving banners.

At the Cross, at the Cross,
Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith
I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!

So they sang with abundant energy, and, as Norman stood looking down upon the procession, suddenly from the midst of the singers there flashed upon his vision a girlish face uplifted and white with religious exaltation. It was the face of Jessie Borland, and her clear soprano rang high above the coarser voices in the crowd as she passed on and disappeared.





CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE BIDES ITS TIME.

Oh that it were possible,
After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love
About me once again!

TENNYSON.

AND how had Clara Porteous been faring all through the summer days?

It is true that the strain and stress of her life in Edinburgh had left an indelible impression upon her, and that a chance meeting with Norman had power to awaken the old pain which ever slumbered at her heart; but still the present was very sweet to her weary spirit, and she appreciated to the full this time of rest and fallow leisure.

By-and-bye, she promised to herself in those quiet hours when the restless inner voice called to her to 'be up and doing,' she would resume her life-work; and in the meantime her strength slowly returned and hope revived under the influence of the glowing June weather. In the luxurious ease of her uncle's house she blossomed out into new beauty, and gradually she regained something of the sprightliness characteristic of energetic

youth. Her pale face took a faint and lovely tint from the prodigal crimson of the roses that grew so bountifully in the garden which sloped down to the swift-flowing Otter, and altogether Clara was a changed being from the pale, sad girl-student we knew in Edinburgh.

The quiet routine of the somewhat conventional mansion was very pleasing to her order-loving nature, so long compelled to participate in the makeshifts of her father's rooms, and she delighted in re-arranging the massive furniture into homelier grouping and in filling every nook of the pleasant chambers with sweet-scented, many-coloured posies.

Her uncle looked quietly on with well-pleased eyes and much silent self-congratulation. How pretty his niece had become of late—in fact, since she had taken up her abode under his roof! And how much more home-like and pleasing the house had grown since her coming! This was evidently the place for her. She must give up that absurd idea of earning her living by painting pictures. If she would paint, why, she should have a studio built for her own use at the back of the house, and she could paint there in ladylike leisure—certainly not for bread! And thus he wandered off into pleasant dreams of the future, which, however, he kept to himself in the meantime, for he shrewdly conjectured that Clara, having a will of her own, might demur to his projects; it would be time enough to broach the matter when her affections had woven themselves more closely about him and his possessions.

But the days were not all passed by Clara in

dreamful ease. She was occasionally restless and dissatisfied with herself because of her delight in the unstinted luxury of her present life. At these times she recalled the cramping cares and the soaring ambitions of her past with a sigh of regret for the loss of the love which had thrown a glamour over all.

Now she knew—all too late—that she had missed her best chance of usefulness and of happiness on the day when she had sent Norman away; now she realised how much she had been influenced by his love, how much of inward growth she owed to his companionship, how cheaply she had held his unwearying devotion; and she would gladly have gone back to the old life of poverty, if by doing so she could have found love waiting to greet her there.

She saw Norman but seldom now, and never to speak to alone. She sometimes wondered if, in spite of his parting protestation that he would always love her, he had forgotten the past with its tender mutual memories, for he seemed so engrossed with his arduous church-work, and he so silently and habitually ignored the old times, that it looked as if he had no leisure and no desire to think of her. She did not know how much her presence in church on the Sabbath day influenced Norman even in the midst of his most sacred duties. His love was as sacred to him as his religion, and often he was thankful for the sweet and potent encouragement which her grave uplifted face brought him as he glanced towards Mr. Morgan's pew, where she sat in her cool white summer gown

and her dainty bonnet with its ribbons of black, looking, he thought, like a saint in her fair maiden purity.

One June day, when the air was heavy with the odours from the new-mown hay and the bean-fields that lay along the banks of the Otter, winding like a silver belt beneath the cool shade of the alders whose foliage danced a quaint shadow-dance upon the glittering surface of the water, Clara was walking by the stream when she saw Norman crossing the iron bridge opposite her uncle's house.

He proceeded to walk down the stream towards her, although she saw that as yet he was unobservant of her proximity, for his head was bent and he swung his staff absently about, as if he were deep in thought.

He had come out, indeed, to think over his next Sabbath sermon, for he loved to study amid the calm which pervades nature's green seclusions, and he found her liberal spaces more conducive to thought than the confined, book-lined walls of the Manse library.

He was close upon Clara when he became aware of her presence, and his face flushed for a moment as he raised his hat and calmly extended his hand.

A sudden tremor shook her voice as she wished him 'good afternoon,' but there was no sign of emotion in his voice as he returned her greeting.

He was fast learning his lesson on the wisdom of

patience and self-restraint, and his firm belief that he would ultimately win Clara for his wife gave him an air of serenity and ease which she mistook for coldness. She would fain have passed by, but he detained her.

'I am glad that we have met,' he said. 'I wanted to tell you that you need not fear any reference to the past from me. I would like you to feel quite sure of that. Let us meet at ease, only let me be your friend, since that is all I may ask. Shall it be so?' He paused and looked into her downcast face. Was she quite content, he wondered, that they two should be merely friends?

'Thank you; that will be best,' she answered in a low voice, while her heart whispered to her the bitter words, 'Ah, he has ceased to love you!'

'I am glad to find you still at Otterbank,' said Norman,—'glad to think that you have at last a little time of quietness and freedom from care. Do you still cherish by the banks of the Otter your old dream of fame? This lovely spot must be an inspiration to you, I am sure. I expect great things from you yet.' Little did he think how cruelly these words stung her!

'I am surprised to find that you still retain any faith in me,' she said with a look of pain in her brown eyes, which were fixed upon the distant Arran hills, half-concealed by the soft haze that tempered the sunny blue sky. 'And, moreover, I am beginning to realise—as you told me I should—that fame for me may be a very

empty and barren thing.' Her voice faltered in spite of her efforts to keep it steady.

Norman flushed to the brow and then grew pale. It was difficult for him to witness her emotion and resist his impulse to offer her his love once more. He held his peace, for there was danger in the only words he could have spoken. It would be unsafe to test her heart yet—he must wait a little longer. He turned with her as she made a movement to go, and they walked silently together in the direction of Otterbank House, the residence of Mr. Morgan.

It was one of those divine June days in which even the most active of men may have passing desires for the green solitudes and leisure of nature, and think amid the toil and moil of life of the primitive delight of lying supine beneath the undulant boughs of some leafy tree, listening to the dreamy stir of the woodlands; and even the hard-working Otter, stealing forth from the smoky haze of the busy town, participated in the beauty and luxuriant life of the summer.

It flowed on in gentle curves, half-hidden in places by tall willow-herbs and creamy meadow-sweet, and the emerald banks were tapestried by the blossoms dear to lovers—the lovely forget-me-nots which had stolen their tints from the summer sky. Countless daisies spangled the grass and mingled with the golden buttercups, whose blonde enamel contrasted so richly with the gipsy gold of the tall dock-sorrel, over which hovered bronze and yellow butterflies, while dancing companies of midges gyrated madly above the rippling water. How happy

ought to be the lovers who wandered there! But they were not happy, for Norman strode silently onward, while Clara with difficulty restrained her tears. After a little she broke the silence.

'I would not like you to think that I have forgotten my purpose—my art—although I have so strangely found a peaceful home and an uncle's love; only I am thankful to rest for a while,' she said.

'Yes, yes,' replied Norman. 'You must rest. There is time enough to think of other things.'

'But I feel that it is due to myself that I should explain why I am here.'

'No; I understand you very well. To come here was the best, the only thing you could do.'

'Do not mistake me!' she interrupted with a sharp ring in her voice. 'I came here because I failed. I could not struggle alone, and my health gave way. I failed where I thought I would be strong—and so I came here. I thought that after a period of rest I would return to my work. Do not imagine that I came here because I desired to live at ease, or—or for any other reason.'

'Clara!' exclaimed Norman; 'why do you thus wrong yourself and me? I will not allow you to speak in such a manner!'

Under the stress of old emotions he was his old imperious self once more, and Clara acknowledged it with a beating heart.

'I did not mean to annoy you—only to let you

know,' she faltered with a sob,—'to let you know that after a time I thought that, since the old barriers were removed, I might pursue my art steadily; but the days drift past, and still I do not feel inclined for work. I have no joy in the thought of my work—the springs of action seem broken; but I *will* work! Ah, do not think that I have forgotten my art, only just now I do not seem to see things so clearly as of old. I wish to tell you all this, that you may understand why'—

He lifted his hand to stop her confession. 'I understand, I understand!' he cried as they paused in farewell at the iron bridge opposite Otterbank House. 'I trust you in everything. Be content to rest awhile, and your former impulse to work will return.' He took her hand. Truly he understood better than Clara herself what was amiss in her life; but not yet would he speak.

'We will part here,' he said. 'I am glad that we have met to-day. I am glad for your sake that you have found such a pleasant resting-place as your uncle's home. It is a blessed thing to be loved and cared for as he will love and care for you. Good-day.'

Her face was averted, or she would have seen the old strong love leap up for a moment into his eyes. She heard only the calm words of courteous interest, and she shook hands and turned away sick at heart.

'He has ceased to love me! He has ceased to love me!' she said within herself in a tumult of pain. But

Norman strode across the bridge toward the Manse with a clang almost of triumph in his steps as he communed with his heart; for *his* words were, 'She loves me still! She loves me still! Have patience, oh my heart—she loves me still!'



CHAPTER XVII.

JIM'S DILEMMA.

Souls are dangerous things to carry straight
Through all the spilt saltpetre of the world.

E. B. BROWNING.

ONE evening, still in the month of June, Jim Borland took his way towards the little cottage which held his heart's dearest treasure.

The sun, which was setting behind a bank of silver-lined clouds, threw broad shafts of radiance down into the garden, thereby transforming it into an Eden with paths leading straight up into the as yet unbarred heavens.

Like Eden, too, the garden was sweet with fragrance and colour, for Mysie's rose-bushes, ablush with bursting buds, sent forth a delicious incense to mingle with the subtle odours stealing forth from the various flowers to greet the falling dew.

The vesper songs of merle and mavis throbbed melodiously through the shady silence, and in the fields beyond the garden their summer tenants, the larks, had commenced their spiral downward flight, singing the

while with the eager and spasmodic impatience of glad wanderers homeward-bound.

Mysie was sitting in the honeysuckle porch, and through the airy foliage climbing over the rustic woodwork fell the slanting rays of the sun upon her sweet face, while her soft blind eyes were raised to the sky as if they dimly divined the beauty of the fair outer world. Her hands were folded quietly on her apron of spotless white and a song of gratitude was on her lips:—

> Father, I know that all my life
> Is portioned out by Thee,
> And the trials that are sure to come
> I do not fear to see;
> But I ask Thee for a present mind,
> Intent on serving Thee.

Thus she sang, raising her devout human voice to perfect the adoration ascending to the Creator in a silent harmony of colour and fragrance from the flowers, and finding its audible expression in the mellow songs of the untiring birds.

Jim Borland, who was coming along the garden path, heard her singing, and the low-toned, sympathetic voice went straight to his heart. Involuntarily he doffed his cap, and, stepping off the gravel on to the velvet turf that bordered the walk, he paused motionless, with a feeling that the place whereon he stood was holy ground, and himself in the earthly presence of a soul visibly refining itself for the kingdom of heaven.

He gazed reverently at the sweet, intent face of his blind sweetheart, feeling—with a sinking heart, poor fellow!—how far beyond his love Mysie's inner vision

had carried her; for her countenance, always delicate in its beauty, was now luminous with the spiritual meaning of the hymn that had borne her to the throne of God.

Jim himself was worth looking at as he stood listening while Mysie proceeded with her singing. One felt that the arrested action and patience of his present attitude was not the expression of a mood habitual to him, for there was an air of almost ferocious impulsiveness in his lithe form and sharp face that suggested something of the graceful vigour and unnatural calm of a wild animal whose native impulse was to spring and to destroy.

He was not of quite the common type of working men, although in their ranks such specimens of men are more likely to be found than in any other. Mentally he was in a transition stage; speculative, like many of his class, he yet carried his speculations to conclusions which were warranted neither by a full knowledge nor by the true logic of the subjects engaging his thoughts. His crude Socialism, for instance, had only engendered in his mind a reckless and ignorant tendency to free-thinking, which he displayed so ostentatiously as to make for himself many enemies.

His thought, indeed, was neither deep nor thorough; he had abundant natural talent, but he was continually being carried away by half-digested ideas, which were but the froth and fermentation of restless ignorance—redeemed from conceit, however, by an equally restless craving for knowledge.

Whether the churning process going on in Jim's mind would ultimately settle into solid thoughtfulness and mature conviction was doubtful, for his recklessness of consequences and his want of self-control too often defeated his most carefully-considered plans. Probably age and dear-bought experience alone would mellow the original harshness and crudeness of his character.

In the meantime, he was a very comely youth as he stood in the sunny garden in the bloom of his early manhood. The level sunbeams, touching his thin, clear-cut face, tried in vain to quench the keen light of his large grey eyes and lost themselves at last in the bright confusion of his auburn hair, which stood up in a wave of warm colour from his broad and swarthy brow; and his after-work suit of pilot-blue displayed his tall and well-knit figure to much advantage.

Outwardly, therefore, Jim was well worth any woman's love, and Mysie's pathetic reference to the 'glamour o' the carnal e'e' is easily intelligible, for the blind girl felt convinced that nothing but her blindness shielded her from yielding to his desire for marriage—a marriage which her intense but literal faith turned into a snare of the devil.

Inwardly Jim greatly needed the persevering courage and strength of purpose with which the love of every woman worthy of the name can endow—for a time at least—the man she loves. Alas! woman's love is limited by lack of faith in its own ideal; but in spite

of that it is second only in power to the love of that God whose name is Love.

Now, Jim had come to Mysie with a problem that demanded solution. He was in a dilemma, and he had sought his sweetheart with a sort of forlorn hope that she, being shut out from the world and impervious to the worldly considerations of expediency which so often determine men's actions, might see more clearly than he could the proper course for him to take.

> I would not have the restless will
> That hurries to and fro,
> Seeking for some great thing to do,
> Or secret thing to know.
> I would be treated as a child,
> And guided where I go,

sang Mysie, unaware of a listener to whose heart the words of her hymn sent a chill which was half contempt for the humble-minded Christianity expressed in the poem and half self-pity for his spiritual remoteness from herself, for Jim was all too conscious that his was a restless will, ever on the outlook for 'some secret thing to know.'

He moved his feet impatiently, and at the sound Mysie stopped singing and turned her face apprehensively towards him. The suddenness of the movement confused her, for she was easily startled by unexplainable noises, as she had not that exquisite nicety in the sense of hearing which is the invariable compensation for the want of sight given to such as are born blind.

'Don't be alarmed, Mysie!' Jim hastened to say,

advancing to meet her; and she smiled at the sound of his voice, while he took heart again when he saw the swift blush that rose to her cheek.

He took her hand, and they walked together into the cottage, where Mysie at once began to spread the table for supper, moving about with a deft gracefulness wonderful to see in one bereft of sight.

'I'm not sure that I agree with the invalid sentiments of that hymn you were singing, Mysie,' said Jim, lying back in Adam's arm-chair, with his eyes upon her as she moved silently about the kitchen. 'It's a poor sort of spirit that would be "treated as a child, and *guided* where it goes." I've had too much of that sort of leading-string religion to put up with from my father; and besides it's natural for some folk to be "seeking for some great thing to do." How would the world get along unless it was so? No, no, lass; your hymn won't do for me. It may do very well for folk that are ailing, or for women, or even for folk that have had their fling, or'—

'Or folk that's *blind*—like me!' interrupted Mysie without any bitterness. 'So be it; but there are ither holy words that wad suit you, Jim.'

'Don't think that I meant to hurt you, Mysie!' cried he. 'If all religious folk were like you, lass, there would be some hope for this world. But I'll own that the reason I object to your hymn to-night is that I *am* "seeking for some great thing to do," and, as I'm not very sure whether it's right or wrong, I came to you to tell me.'

Mysie crossed over to the window and sat down to her knitting.

'Weel, lad, what is it?' she said with a smile. 'But ye never *tak'* my advice, ye ken!'

'Well, you see, Mysie, Morgan has offered me a hundred pounds for that machine of mine, and I have got to let him know if I accept his offer in three weeks. But I've been thinking a lot while I was making the machine'—

'Yes?' interrogated Mysie as Jim hesitated.

'And I am not sure now whether I should be doing right to sell it to Morgan, because, you see, it is bound to supersede labour to some extent; and although I thought that a grand thing at first, it looked different when I began to consider that if I gave it to Morgan I would be taking the bread out of the mouths of the men I *know*. There's Sanny Elshender, for instance, that keeps his dead sister's weans, and Rab Reyburn that has a big family and a delicate wife to provide for, and there's Gavin Kerr, and Morrison, and Muir,—they would all get the bag if Morgan takes over my machine—they and many more; and in the meantime nobody but myself would get any advantage, though in the long-run it would pay Morgan fifty times over to buy it.'

'Dear, dear!' said Mysie. 'What for didna ye think o' a' that before, Jim?'

'Well, you see the machine can do the work better and cheaper and quicker than can be done by manual labour, and besides, I was carried away by the *cleverness*

of the thing,' said Jim with a blush. 'I thought it a capital idea and a most ingenious contrivance; and the thing seemed to possess me until I was forced to work it out. Day and night I wrought at it, and I couldn't rest until it was finished. But as I wrought and saw the machine growing under my hand, the thoughts that I told you of grew too; and then the mischief is that I began to read books on Socialism, of which I had heard something in America. You don't know anything about that, but it would give the working men a fairer share of the produce of their labour; and then after I began to speak to the men on the subject, they taunted me about this machine.'

'What made ye speak to the men?' inquired Mysie in mild surprise.

'I couldn't help it. The idea took such a hold of me, you see; and when the men taunted me I was dumb. I saw at once that I wasn't consistent in egging them on to better themselves and at the same time inventing and disposing of machinery.'

'Weel, Jim, just dinna sell the machine. It's an awfu' thing to tak' the bread oot o' bairnies' mou's,' said Mysie, placidly knitting.

'But, Mysie,' stammered Jim, 'think of getting a hundred pounds! And not only that, but it is a splendid opening for me. Why, I may become a manager or even a master myself!' Jim stopped short, startled and rueful. 'Hullo!' he cried with a whistle; 'the mischief is out! My sympathies are with the masters after all! I was mad enough when old Hughie Drennan told me

so. Out of my own mouth am I condemned, Mysie lass!'

But she saw nothing at all singular in Jim's confession or in his forecast of his future.

'Of course you'll be a maister some day,' she said with a bright smile. 'Hoo can it be ony ither wi' a lad like you? I dinna think ye ken very weel what ye wad be at, Jim; or else I dinna understand enough aboot the matter to advise ye.'

'It stands like this, Mysie: I would like to better the class I belong to and to help them to better themselves, for they don't get fair play in Morgan's foundry; and, on the other hand, they would think it all tall talk and have a right to turn against me if with these sentiments I introduced more machinery into the work.'

'Verra weel, lad; dinna sell your machine. Ye'll get on withoot it, I'se warrant.'

'But don't you see, Mysie, that if I refuse to sell it somebody is sure to come forward with something similar, and Morgan is so keen after anything in that line that he is sure to buy it, and so, after all, the men will get the bag!'

'Weel, but their dismissal winna lie on *your* conscience.'

'No; but think of the influence I should gain in the town if I became known as an inventor, and the position I might aspire to, and the money I would make!'

'Oh, laddie,' cried Mysie with a laugh, 'dinna speak

as if ye were tryin' to convince *me*. It's yoursel' that maun settle the matter.'

'But, Mysie, I would like you to see the difficulty. It's true that I would fain be a leader among the workmen, but it is also true that to be that I must give up my own prospects. And oh, Mysie, think of all I could give you when you are my wife'—

She raised her hand to stop the impetuous words.

'Leave that oot o' the question, Jim, and settle the matter with your conscience. I dinna think I will ever be your wife—no' even if I win back my sicht,' said she in a low voice.

Jim almost forgot his own perplexity in his surprise at her words. He stared at her in astonishment.

'Mr. Reid has been here,' she said, 'and he has a friend in Edinburgh—a doctor that understands a' aboot the een, and he's comin' to spend a few weeks at the Manse, and the minister wants me to let him examine my een, for he fancies my sicht may be restored. He's comin' next week.'

'Why, Mysie, that's grand news! If you get back your sight we could get married at once!'

'But ye forget that I have just telt ye I canna be your wife,' said Mysie, turning very pale. 'I wad rather remain blind, Jim, than put the barrier o' sicht between you an' me.'

'You are dreaming, Mysie! It's your blindness that's the only barrier between us—unless you mean that you do not love me any longer.'

'Na, lad; I lo'e ye as weel as ever. What I mean is that if I win back my sicht it will be a sad day for you an' me; for as lang as I am blind I dinna need to set my heart on marriage, but if ance I saw!— Oh, Jim, I canna marry an unbeliever, ane that scoffs at a' I hold dear and sacred. Ye dinna care for religion, an' ye never gang to the kirk,' said Mysie with tears in her poor blind eyes. 'An' the Bible says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."'

Jim sat very straight and silent in his chair, with his hands plunged into his pockets, and his face fixed sternly on the opposite wall. He despaired of gaining Mysie's toleration for his unbelief, because, as he well knew, her piety was the undeniable outcome of a blissful incapacity for doubt and a consequent ignorance of the difficulties of belief. She had grasped the essential truths of Christianity through her felt need of and love for a personal Saviour.

Much of her gentle power lay in this ignorance and limitation. She did not feel the necessity which Jim felt for grappling with religious problems, for her instinct was to believe, while his was to doubt, all that was taught in the Church; his intellect dominated his heart, and he could take nothing for granted.

'Do you think it will make me any better if *you* give me up?' he said at last with bitterness.

'I canna think that *that* wad keep ye aff the richt road,' said Mysie earnestly. 'Only I wish that God wad just let me bide blind a' my days. My strength lies in my blindness, an' I can pray for your repent-

ance better blind.' The pathos of her words touched him.

'Look here, Mysie,' he said firmly, 'don't delude yourself with the idea that I will ever turn out a sanctimonious humbug like my father. Don't you see that I *cannot* become religious as you would like? I wish that I could get you to understand how I detest all that cant about religion that goes on at home. I am sick of it. I don't say that *you* are insincere, but my father, and Morgan, and every minister I ever came to close quarters with, are just Pharisees and hypocrites. Women may be different. Religion was made for them. There's Jessie, she's desperately in earnest over her ridiculous revivals, and my mother, I know'—Jim paused with a lump in his throat—'and *you* are good, lass, so it must be natural for women to be religious. It doesn't improve men, as far as I have seen. Good gracious! just fancy a strong young fellow like me going snivelling about like an old wife and crying that folk must repent and save themselves from what they call Hell, and imploring them to sneak into another place they are pleased to call Heaven! Bah! I prefer to do my work here in an honest fashion and get all the good I can out of this world—it's good enough for me. Think of the millions of human beings, one just as good as another, that never heard of this "salvation." There's too many of us to expect individual attention, it seems to me, so we must just do what we can for ourselves and help each other if we've a mind to. If God is what *you* say, Mysie, I can trust Him for the rest.'

She was accustomed to Jim's tirades against religion; his language had ceased to shock her, and now she returned to the charge with gentle persistence.

'If ye could only believe that God is our Heavenly Father, Jim, ye wad understand things better. God is love,' said she with touching earnestness, forgetting that over his unenlightened mind and thwarted filial affection the beautiful image of the Fatherhood of God had no power.

'God is justice—I believe that at any rate! He won't stand scamped work of any sort, even if folk neglect it for the sake of preaching repentance—as my father does. *As you sin, you suffer*—that's nature's creed, and it's mine too!' cried Jim with a flush of enthusiasm. 'And as for congratulating myself, like my father and his kind, on being saved while others perish, I wouldn't have that salvation at any price! My father's God is not *my* God!' cried Jim hotly, getting up and striding about the tiny kitchen in his wrath.

'Jim,' said Mysie with a smile that was divine in its forbearance and loving-kindness because it was the reflex of her likeness to the Christ she adored, 'I am sure that God will lead ye stracht to Himsel'—in His ain way and in His ain time. I'm no' clever like you, an' I canna argue aboot my faith, but I believe that ye shall yet win into the Kingdom. In His ain way He leads us a'.'

But Jim would not listen to her gentle words.

'You need not delude yourself, Mysie, with the fancy that I shall ever accept your creed. It is impossible.

I doubt, dear lass, that all is over between you and me if you will not take me as I am. I always knew that you were too good for me,' said he with a break in his voice.

'Dear Jim, I'll pray that the Spirit may be gracious to you, for oh, lad, lad! I wad fain marry ye!' she cried, her woman's heart getting the ascendency. 'Oh, Jim, I will pray for the day to come when you can say'—

He interrupted her petulantly.

'Say! oh, I could easily *say* all you desire; but how do you know that I would be honest when I have so much at stake?' he cried.

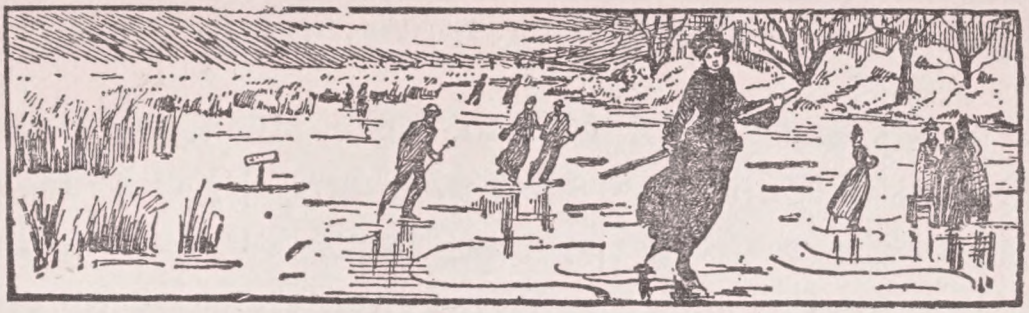
'I trust ye. Ye canna be untrue,' said she simply, and Jim's sore heart felt softer at her gentle words of faith in him.

'Oh, Mysie, you do not feel this as I do. You have the happiness of being able to trust although you cannot understand,' he said sadly.

'I sometimes think I *am* blest abune the lave,' she replied wistfully, 'especially when I think that the Lord took awa' my sicht that I might aye dwell in *His* licht. It's waur for you, Jim, I alloo, for you are compelled to value the things ye can *see*. Oh, Jim, believe me, earthly vision, bonnie though it is, looks through a fog that hides the divine glory. It's you that's blind and it's me that sees—for God takes special charge ower the een o' the blind, and He cleanses them frae the mire o' the warld, so that they may see the true licht that dwells around Himsel'.'

Mysie's heart-felt religion was as wings carrying her into regions of exalted feeling from which Jim felt that he was debarred, and he rose to depart, anguished with the thought that he could never enter with his beloved into that holy of holies where she habitually dwelt.





CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EVENING RENCONTRE.

Ah, when shall all men's good
Be each man's rule, and universal Peace
Lie like a shaft of light across the land?

TENNYSON.

THE last pale remnant of rosy colour still lingered in the western horizon, and in the blue dome a few faint stars were twinkling round the crescent of the young moon, while the twilight expanse of southern sky was alternately flushed and darkened by the pulsations of the ruddy glare from the furnaces of the neighbouring village of Heckford.

But as Jim Borland left the cottage he was too intent on his own thoughts to note any of these outward signs that 'the heavens were telling the glory of God.' Nature had nothing to say to him. Indeed, he was feeling so out of tune with all the world that he closed the garden gate with an emphasis suspiciously akin to a bang; nor did it improve his temper to remember that Mysie from the cottage hearth would hear and attribute the sound to its true cause.

Jim was angry not only with things in general—it was

not at all unusual for him to waste much superfluous energy in that direction—but with himself, with Mysie, and, in short, with all the unbendingly iron facts of life, which refused to suit themselves to his special requirements. 'The times were out of joint' with him, and he felt rather sick of such a contrary world. He couldn't adapt his square person to the round hole of proverbial fame; and now he strode along in the peaceful summer evening with a very tumult of unrest in his breast. He pulled his cap morosely over his eyes and plunged his hands deep into his pockets as vague, rebellious thoughts chased each other through his mind. He thought of giving up the puzzle of life in the old country altogether, and of going off once more to America to push his fortune. Why should he stay at Otterton, since Mysie had made it so abundantly clear that she would have nothing to do with him, and since his fellow-workmen derided his efforts on their behalf?

America was the very country for a working man who could use hands and brains to some purpose, as Jim flattered himself he could, and his restless nature longed for the wider sphere and renewed opportunities which that large country would give him.

Otterton—said Jim contemptuously to himself—was a paltry, local affair, and no town in the old country, for that part, was much better. The labour market was overstocked, wages were next to nothing at all, and a man was looked at with suspicion and jealousy if he tried to get out of the rut of old customs—in fact, the whole country swarmed with prejudice and humbug of

every description! What chance had a young fellow like himself to get on comfortably? He would cut the whole concern, and perhaps—perhaps he would learn to forget Mysie when he was far away. He dashed his hand impatiently across his eyes wherein lurked a suspicious moisture, and crossed the dewy fields to reach the Waterside.

Ah, if he could be sure of forgetting Mysie, he might get on well enough; but at the thought there uprose before his mental vision the gentle image of his blind sweetheart, endowed with all the sacred influence of love to move him, and as he remembered all the sweet counsel, the earnest affection, the matchless honesty which had so often guided him, he knew that never could he forget her—never; for then would he forget purity and truth and all that exalted a man above the level of the brute.

Then his thoughts wandered off to his invention. If he could only make up his mind about that! And if he could see a way, compatible with honesty, of finding some reality, some personal reality, in that religion which Mysie loved, then he could become a new man and she would marry him.

But here his musings came to an abrupt termination, for, as he swung somewhat carelessly round the corner of the iron bridge spanning the Otter, he came sharply against Norman, who was leaning upon the gleaming parapet, smoking a meditative pipe and evidently absorbed in thought.

Jim's first impulse was to pass on with an ungracious

apology, but suddenly he remembered that to the minister's kind interest Mysie would in all probability owe the recovery of her sight.

He stood still, therefore, and, looking at Norman with an air half-defiant, half-conciliatory, he said,—

'Mysie Auld has just been telling me, sir, that you think there is a chance of her recovering her sight.'

'Yes, I hope there is,' replied Norman with a kindly smile. 'Won't you take a stroll with me a little way down-stream? It is a lovely evening, and I should like to have a talk with you.'

Jim's face flushed high, but he nodded without speaking, and, to his shamefaced surprise, he found himself walking alongside of his pet aversion — a minister! But there was that in this particular minister's face which was altogether independent of any outward signs of his profession—a look of grave, strong kindness, of consecration almost, which proclaimed him to be a veritable helper of men, a genuine high priest of humanity, ordained by nature to the office which would still have been his although he had never worn the garb of a minister of Christ. Thank God that there are such born priests and brothers of struggling men, and may you and I meet one of their noble number in the dark hours of our extremest conflicts!

Ere long Jim Borland found himself laying bare the drama of his life to Norman. All his love troubles, his perplexities regarding his invention, his general dissatisfaction with the world, were poured into the young minister's sympathetic ear.

They walked on in the falling dusk until it was time to retrace their steps, and when the Manse gate was reached Jim paused in his impetuous flow of talk and would have said good-night, but Norman would not hear of parting.

'Won't you come in?' he said. 'I should like to have some further conversation with you;' and he stood aside and held the gate open with a smile in which there was no subtle essence of condescension wherewith to vex the jealously proud soul of the young working man. He stepped within the Manse grounds and stood waiting till Norman had closed the gate.

At this moment Mr. Morgan advanced and would have stopped to speak to the minister, but, catching sight of Jim Borland, he passed on with a stiff bow and a muttered salutation, and with a surprised and angry scowl upon his face. Jim's pride was up in arms. He could not restrain the indignant stream of words that rushed to his lips. There never was, by any chance, a key of prudence at hand to lock in the anger that so readily found its way to the door of Jim's lips.

'There's Morgan!' he said excitedly. 'He's angry because he has seen me here. He thinks that I am not fit to be in your company; and yet he's religious! He's a pillar in your kirk, and as pious as you please—outside business hours. I would like to know how his religion affects his relationship to his men? Why, religion has nothing to do with business, in his opinion. Self-interest is his God!'

'Aren't you rather hard upon him? You do not

know him altogether—you may be mistaken,' suggested Norman mildly.

'I know quite enough of him! I never heard of him doing an unselfish act. He can be kind enough, but it always turns out to his own advantage in the end. He thinks precious little of the workmen's lives after work-hours. He gets his pound of flesh, and in return he gives them just as much wages as will keep them from starving. Oh, sir, if you had known, as so many in Otterton know, the weary aching of unsatisfied hunger—not starvation, but never satisfied hunger!'—

He broke off in strong emotion, and for a moment there was silence except for the crunching of their steps upon the gravelled walk. They reached the door, and Norman led the way up-stairs to his study. He desired to make his shy, wild visitor feel quite at ease with him, and to assure him that he at least was not out of sympathy with the young workman's impulsiveness and strong, resistant youth. Was not he himself also a young man with a heart that beat humanly strong beneath the broadcloth of his holy office?

Norman lighted the study lamp, that its solitary beam might not put to flight the dusky sweetness of the summer night stealing in through the window which he left open and unscreened. The soft murmur of the Otter reached their ears, and from the window it could be seen winding wan and ghostly beneath the silvery light of the rising moon, coiling its way with many a ripple through level fields of clover and ripening grain, until at

last it was lost to view amid the sombre silence of a fir plantation.

Norman motioned him to a comfortable chair of crimson morocco, and sat down near him in his own especial seat by the window.

'Is there no way of coming to an amicable settlement with Mr. Morgan about the wages question?' he inquired. He had heard from different sources of this crying grievance of the men who worked at Otterbank Foundry.

'Not unless the men join the Union,' replied Jim. 'We must just take the wages he gives us or starve, because the masters are banded together, and any workman who makes himself notorious in any way is dismissed, and he becomes a marked man throughout the whole county, and is known among the masters as a malcontent and a stirrer-up of strife.'

'And how would the Union help you?'

'For one thing, there would be a fixed minimum wage higher than any that Morgan gives. This hand-to-mouth system is taking the pith out of the men, but they pretend that they are satisfied because they are afraid that Morgan would be down upon them if they grumble. Socialism is the thing. It will bring us redress and equality.'

Norman smiled, but he was content to sift for the grains of sterling gold that lay among the dross of Jim's opinions.

'But it seems to me that, as things stand, equality is impossible,' he said quietly.

Jim moved restlessly in his chair. His peppery temper was ready to break forth in spite of his growing respect for the minister.

'No, it is not impossible,' he said with an emphasis which was evidently but a substitute for a stronger means of expression. 'I tell you, Mr. Reid, that if it was not for the monopoly and the inordinate greed that for ever cries, "Give! give!" even the least able to work and the poorest endowed of men would have abundance. Ah, sir, you sit here in a comfortable house, and you have plenty to eat, and you have books. What of those who are never alone, for there is no room, never satisfied with their scanty bread, never sufficiently at ease in their minds to read? Ah, if all had but the bare comforts of life, what a happy world this would be!'

Norman shook his head. 'It is a visionary Utopia,' he said gently. 'Poverty and wealth are the natural extremes resulting from the operation of an inflexible social law. And Christ Himself said, "The poor ye have always with you."'

Jim interrupted him rudely. He leaned forward eagerly in his chair, exclaiming, 'There's the cloven hoof!—there's the confounded priestcraft that would like to stop all progress! I beg your pardon, sir,' he added more gently; 'but the thing touches me to the quick, you see.'

'There is only one way of gaining true equality for all mankind,' said Norman thoughtfully. 'Let all become

Christians—in other words, let the kingdom of heaven begin on earth.'

'I know nothing about your kingdom of heaven, but I could understand that if Christianity, instead of being a sham, was all that it professed to be, the poor and down-trodden among men would not need to look to Socialism for redress. What do the representatives of Christianity do for the poor to whom their leader preached the gospel?' cried Jim sneeringly.

'They walk in their Master's footsteps!' broke in Norman. 'You do not know Christianity. I have told you before that you are much to be pitied if you have never known a true Christian.'

Jim laughed harshly. 'I have read that Christ was a Socialist,' he said, 'and all I can say is, that if the principles professed by the Christians *I* know regulated their actions, this would be a different world. I believe that Christ *was* a Socialist—whether He was *divine* is another matter—and if His teaching was carried out literally, we might begin to look for the redemption of the race.'

'I agree with you so far,' replied Norman. 'But why not go a step farther with *me* now? Don't you see that Christ, by teaching what you call Socialism—which is the brotherhood of men—implies that men have one Father—God?'

'I don't know. It seems to me that Socialism tends to Atheism. We are left pretty much to ourselves, as far as I can see. The human race struggles and blunders on gradually into something better. God to me is

another name for *chance*—or, if you will, *law*—and the poor have the brunt of the struggle to bear. Your creed is dying, sir!' said Jim suddenly.

'Not at all!' cried Norman with a swift light of battle in his eyes. 'I admit that there are signs of a change of *form*, but the creed itself is essentially indestructible. Our creed is for all time. Its form must be evanescent, because it is meant to suit the needs of the generations as they come. To-day we preach the Fatherhood of God. I will pray that you may get a glimpse of that divine fact; it would help you to unravel many tangled problems for the welfare of your fellows.'

'I care nothing about Him!' said Jim angrily.

'I think you do. You resist Him. To you, therefore, He is a reality. Resistance to God is a much more hopeful sign in a soul than dull indifference to Him.'

'I never met a minister before who talked to me like that,' said Jim frankly. 'They were one and all shocked at me.'

'Own that you rather gloried in shocking them,' said Norman laughingly.

'Well—I did. Do you really mean to say that you believe that the Christian creed changes to suit the times, Mr. Reid? That's not very orthodox, is it?'

'The *form* that the indestructible truth which is the kernel of the creed takes, suits itself to the times—that is what I mean,' rejoined Norman, rising from his chair and commencing softly to pace to and fro.

'The true Church of God is independent of so-called orthodoxy,' said he. 'Just as nature curbs her immature buds to protect them from blighting frosts, so do we wrap our creed in the protecting sheaths of dogma. Just as nature flings off her bud-sheaths in the fulness of time, so will we fling off the straining membranes of the various doctrines, and will emerge free and perfect in the fulness of time to form the eternal Church of Christian brotherhood. We are weak, and we long for purely human love and approbation in our journey through the world. And God's love seems afar; but we shall surely reach it, brother clasping the hand of brother, forming a chain that will reach to Heaven, for the purest shall join hands with Christ the Elder Brother, who will lead us to the Father—the goal of all the creeds.'

There was a solemn silence in the room for a little space. Jim was conscious of a strange feeling of awe as he looked at Norman pacing silently up and down with his head sunk on his breast. No sound broke the silence save the rush of the Otter past the moonlit garden. But slowly Jim gathered courage. The mocking spirit within him reasserted itself.

'I admit that there may be a germ of truth beneath the dusty accumulations of Christian doctrines, but your Christian is like a mole—he has jinked so long back and forward among the earth and lumber that his coat is warranted to keep the nap sleek and fine both ways; and religion suits enthusiasts very well too, for it's a mere matter of feeling with them. But I—I must look before I leap. I must get the sanction of my

reason before I accept anything for truth. Seeing is believing.'

Norman lighted the gas and drew down the Venetian blinds before he spoke. He had been moved to speak out of his inmost soul, and he felt tremulous and weak after the effort. He flung himself somewhat wearily back in his chair, as he said with a gentle shake of the head, 'Seeing, in this case, is not believing. Belief with a Christian comes before seeing. We apprehend the Son of God by something more subtle than intellect.'

Jim tossed his head impatiently. 'That's Greek to me!' he said rudely. 'I suppose that's another trick of the ministers, to keep back reasonable thinking.'

Norman was too large-hearted to take offence. He smiled at the display of youthful intolerance.

'If your reason is to be your guide in the search for truth,' he said, 'why do you argue with me, biassed on the other side? You are too dogmatic to be unprejudiced, I fear.'

Jim had the grace to feel ashamed. He coloured, while Norman proceeded to speak in earnest tones which were like a prayer.

'I thank God that He revealed Himself as the Father, that He sent a Redeemer into this poor world—not to minister to squeamish intellects, not to satisfy nor to exalt the reason of man, but to confound the wise, to exalt those of low degree. Ah, young man, you are strong and clever and arrogant in your pride of intellect! Humble yourself if you truly desire the weal of the

handicapped among your fellows. You would give them a redemption subject to earthly law and ending with the grave? Christ offers an eternal redemption—mysterious, I grant you, and wholly beyond the logic and the needs of a self-sufficient, cold morality. You will never solve your moral and spiritual problems without this beneficent Christ-figure to explain them. You will never benefit your fellows, as you propose to do, until you realise in your own person the appalling horror, the deadliness of sin. Cast away your cold morality, your intellectual pride, and descend into the midst of the conflict—one with your fellows—for sin is rampant'—

Norman paused abruptly, for after a preliminary knock at the door, Katie, who was unaware that Norman had a visitor in the study, ushered in a timid, girlish figure. It was Jessie Borland, and she coloured painfully when she saw Jim standing by the table with an eager look upon his face.

As the eyes of brother and sister met Jim laughed, —an unpleasant laugh which caused the poor girl to sink nervously into the chair to which Norman conducted her.

'It seems that there are a pair of fools in the family,' said Jim curtly, lifting his cap from the table and advancing towards the door. '*She* is more in your line, Mr. Reid. She, poor thing, needs conversion periodically! She has been a Methodist, a Plymouthite, and a Baptist, and now she is a Salvationist. Perhaps she is going to be converted again!'

Norman felt keenly the ill-breeding and peevish bad

temper displayed by the young man, but he closed the door upon him with a dignified good-night. Then he returned, with a half-repressed sigh, to take up the vicarious burden which this other soul in need brought to his door.





CHAPTER XIX.

THE WIDENING BREACH.

Brutus, I do observe you now of late;
I have not from your eyes that gentleness
And show of love as I was wont to have.

Julius Cæsar.

THE reader will recollect that the unexpected entrance of Clara Porteous into the dining-room of Otterbank House—about two months previous to the date our story has now reached—had suspended the somewhat heated conversation between Norman and her uncle, arising out of the young minister's request for a contribution towards the formation of a Working Men's Club.

Norman had left Otterbank House with his antipathy against his ruling elder strengthened; but, although he had been momentarily hurt and annoyed at the display of domineering temper he had witnessed, the interview left no enduring feeling of resentment. In the interval between that evening and his leaving for Mentone Norman had not again encountered Mr. Morgan, who was absent from Otterton on business; therefore, when at Rothesay he gave his mother the strange and urgently-

demanded promise that he would not quarrel with Mr. Morgan, he could honestly say that so far as he could judge there was no inclination on either side to quarrel, but, on the contrary, a very evident desire on Mr. Morgan's part to be friendly.

Although Norman had often to deplore his tendency to hasty indignation, his nature was too large and generous to be capable of harbouring ill-will towards any one who had struck forth a chance spark from his inflammable temper, and he judged others by himself. He would have been much surprised if he had known—what was actually the case—that, as the outcome of that evening's interview, Mr. Morgan entertained a very decided feeling of hostility towards him.

That the new minister—young, inexperienced, and a stranger to the town — should so precipitately have espoused the cause of the working men who were Mr. Morgan's *bêtes noires*, and that he should have so energetically bestirred himself in the matter of the club, was a very irritating annoyance to the power-loving master of the foundry; but even that was a small thing in comparison with the odious fact that he had not only stopped to listen to a Socialistic speech and vindicated his conduct with quite uncalled-for warmth, but that he had actually been so lost to a proper sense of what was becoming as to take a part in the disreputable affair. For Mr. Morgan had—to his intense disgust—become cognisant of the bare fact that Norman had done so. He did not condescend to inquire into the circumstances that had induced the minister to

speak out for Christ almost in spite of himself, for when once a prejudice obtained a lodgment in Mr. Morgan's mind, straightway the evil growth assumed such bulk and stature that the light of justice and charity became obscured. Moreover he had, as we have seen, taken no pains to conceal his disapproval of Jim Borland's presence within the Manse gates. Chiefly through Jim's indiscretion and vanity, a garbled account of the conversation between him and the minister had been bruited abroad. Jim, in fact, had thrown the gist of that conversation like a glove of defiance in the face of his father and other 'narrow-minded' Christians. He roundly asserted that the new minister was 'something like a man' — that he was none of your strait-laced, self-righteous Pharisees; and he darkly hinted that in congenial company the minister could go a good deal further than he would dare to do in the pulpit—that, in short, he was much too fine a fellow and far too liberal a thinker to suit the good folk of Free St. John's.

This injudicious hero-worship did Norman an incalculable amount of harm, for immediately Dame Rumour—like the bloated, fly-catching spider that she is—began to spin her glutinous webs of scandal.

Soon the idle tea-table Christians of Free St. John's began to whisper that there was cause to fear that their new minister was not quite 'sound;'—that he was rather broad; that he was not orthodox; that he hobnobbed with people of shocking principles—with Socialists and Free-thinkers and people of that sort; and that really with young people growing up in the church, it was a

great pity that Mr. Reid did not preach 'the doctrines' in the good old style, etc., etc.

Here, then, was Mr. Morgan's opportunity at once to gratify his personal animosity, to reprove and admonish the minister, to rescue the church from dishonour, and to cover himself with glory as the defender of the faith! Sad, is it not, to see a man good in the main, and capable of better things, allowing his heart to be poisoned and choked by the ugly fungus of hatred?

Thus, while Norman was daily winning the affections of the humble and the sorrow-laden and bringing many souls to Christ, while he was spending and being spent in the service of his Master, Mr. Morgan was diligently gathering evidence against him and biding his time to strike a telling blow.

Norman's thoughts naturally dwelt much upon his mother's possible motive for so earnestly demanding his promise, and after his return from Rothesay he found himself pondering, with a gravity that was almost a dread, over Mr. Morgan's character as revealed in his behaviour at meetings in the session-house and elsewhere. He shrank from probing his heart to discover the cause of the dull aching which always seemed to lurk there. His mind was so lofty and pure, that he felt contaminated by the thoughts his mother's strange conduct suggested. In these circumstances he perceived sooner than he might otherwise have done the new coldness in Mr. Morgan's manner. He began to detect a spice of antagonism in his demeanour towards him in the business meetings of the church. He also noticed that whereas in the past

Mr. Morgan had courted his company homeward from any such meetings, he now seemed to avoid him, and that he no longer cordially invited him to visit at Otterbank House, which, now that it sheltered Clara Porteous, had for him an attraction it had hitherto lacked.

But Norman, painfully mindful of his strange promise to his mother, was ever courteous and forbearing—a course of procedure which, as was to be expected in the case of a man so overbearing and tyrannical in disposition, merely encouraged Mr. Morgan to proceed further and more openly with his policy of bullying and opposition. It was a positive pleasure to such a man to venture as far as possible in the perilous game of rousing the lion in one whose sacred calling so evidently restrained his natural disposition to anger; and thus Norman's very self-restraint left him at the mercy of his covert enemy, for such he came to the painful conclusion his ruling elder had now undoubtedly become.

One July evening, however, when there was a haze of heat lying over the ripening corn-fields, and the Otter, half choked by water-weeds, ran low in its channel, Mr. Morgan overtook Norman as he was walking somewhat listlessly homeward and accosted him with stiff politeness. 'We are having warm weather, Mr. Reid,' said he, lifting his hat to wipe the sweat from his brow.

'Yes, there is much need of rain. Everything is suffering from the prolonged drought,' rejoined Norman.

'True. If the rain doesn't come soon, the Otter will have disappeared entirely. It is exceptionally low this summer. Such a state of things is bad for the health.'

Norman acquiesced, and they walked on silently together.

'By the way,' said Norman after a little, mainly for the purpose of breaking the awkward silence, 'I have been successful beyond my anticipations in getting the promise of funds to start the Working Men's Club; I think that it will be a solid fact by the New Year,' he added, smiling. 'I have been hunting for subscriptions right and left.'

'So I have heard,' replied Mr. Morgan dryly.

'Would you care about giving something before the list is closed?' inquired Norman with hesitation.

'No; I will not foot any of your insolent subscription lists!' exclaimed Mr. Morgan, completely carried away by his anger. 'I gave you my answer before, sir,' he continued, glancing irefully at Norman's stern face, 'and if you had been a man of any tact or good feeling, you would then have desisted from proceeding with a project so distasteful to me. I am the largest employer of labour in the district, and it is intolerable to find *you* intermeddling with *my* concerns, sir. I tell you plainly that I resent it.'

Norman's face flushed and his eyes flashed dangerously. It was with an effort that he mastered himself.

'I am sorry that the idea of the club is so distasteful to you. I am sorry that you find it such a source of annoyance, but I must say, at the risk of again offending you, that there is a great necessity for such a club, and I find that others must have thought so too, for my scheme has found ready support from—

other employers of labour and men of influence in the town.'

This was adding fuel to the fire of Mr. Morgan's wrath. That *he* should be placed in such a secondary position by this clerical stranger was indeed insulting.

'How do you account for men born and bred in Otterton not providing for this clamant need before *your* advent?' he inquired sarcastically.

'I suppose that they were too busy to take up the matter. You cannot deny that this list shows how favourably the scheme has been considered.' Norman took out his pocket-book, and, opening it, drew forth the list and handed it to Mr. Morgan. The latter glanced at it with growing anger. He was deeply annoyed because his name did not head the list, for in this as in everything else he desired to be foremost. But he scorned to reveal his thoughts to Norman. Returning the paper, he said with the slow emphasis of one who is holding his temper in leash,—

'If you attended properly to the work of your own congregation, sir, you would have less time to meddle with other people's affairs.'

'Mr. Morgan,' cried Norman indignantly, 'you have evidently a desire to quarrel! This matter is the affair of any man who has the best interests of the workmen at heart.'

'Take care that you don't get yourself into trouble in enacting your rôle of working man's champion!' interrupted Mr. Morgan sharply; and thereupon he burst forth into a raging tirade against Norman, Jim Borland,

and Socialism, ending with a scathing accusation of heterodoxy. Norman stood as if petrified. It humiliated him to witness such a demonstration of mad passion. He was so lost in a sense of pity and shame for the unhappy possessor of such an ungovernable temper, that he scarcely realised the personal direction and significance of his ruling elder's denunciation.

But soon Mr. Morgan paused abruptly, conscious of the silent self-restraint on Norman's part. He wished to lash him into retort, he was eager to see him flare out into an answering indignation, so that he might have an excuse for thus pouring out the vials of his wrath. But Norman walked silently by his side, white-lipped, resolute, stern, grieved to the heart that by his imprudent reference to the subscription list he should have provoked the unchristian outburst.

Norman's silence was intolerable to the irate Mr. Morgan. He fancied that it was meant as an insult and a rebuke to him, and in a voice broken by rage he returned to the charge.

'You shall answer for your heterodoxy before the Presbytery, sir! You are a perverter of the truth, a wolf in sheep's clothing, a—a double-faced man!'

At last Norman roused himself; but, mindful even yet of his promise to his mother, he replied with dignity,—

'I am conscious of no wrong-doing. What I have said to lead any one to the conclusion that I am heterodox I know not; but'—with a flash of the natural fire—'what I have said I will stand by. Produce your proofs!'

They had reached the iron bridge now, and Norman

paused and glanced with calm defiance into Mr. Morgan's flushed face.

What was it that suddenly caused the angry elder to take a hasty step backwards and to place a tremulous hand on the bridge for support, even while his mouth was opened to accuse the young minister, and such an expression on his face as might have been there if Norman had dealt him a blow with his clenched hand? Was it the ghost of a buried memory that looked out of the young minister's indignant eyes and animated with the far-away light of the past the sternly resolute face which was on a level with his own?

The scathing words were arrested on his lips, and he found himself weakly trying to account for this baffling experience, while Norman stood awaiting his reply. With a supreme effort he recalled his thoughts.

'I shall produce my proofs at the proper time and in the proper place, Mr. Reid,' he said in a quieter tone.

'But I have a right to demand your meaning, Mr. Morgan. Repeat to me, if you please, the specific charge made against me?'

But the elder was once more lost in elusive memories. Where had he seen that face before? Of whose did it remind him? He felt curiously shaken. He tried hard to recall the words of the charge. After a pause he said, in the peevish tone of one baffled and driven, 'Jim Borland declares that you assert that the Church is independent of orthodoxy.'

'That is true,' replied Norman quietly; 'but my words have been wrested from their context. I am

ready to answer any charge made against me. I repeat the statement'—

The elder interrupted him.

'Good God, Mr. Reid! don't you see how you will unsettle the minds of the young people of the congregation if you promulgate such doctrine?' Mr. Morgan was really horrified, and he tried once more to lash himself into the doubtful freedom of anger. But his effort was like that of a foaming wave dashing itself against a stedfast cliff, and in spite of himself the young minister's face with its haunting suggestion of something which he failed to grasp subdued him. He turned to go. 'I will say good-night, Mr. Reid,' said he slowly. 'You shall hear further of this in the course of a few days;' and he was gone without deigning to acknowledge Norman's grave bow.



CHAPTER XX.

THE SCENE IN THE FOUNDRY.

I pray thee then,
Write me as one who loves my fellow-men.

LEIGH HUNT.

ONE Monday afternoon there was an unusual atmosphere of suppressed excitement in the foundry of Morgan & Co. It was known that that was the day upon which Jim Borland had promised to give the master his decision regarding his invention; and before the great bell clanged, calling the men to resume work after two o'clock, they had stood about the gates in little cliques discussing the pros and cons of the affair.

But none of them professed themselves able to calculate with any certainty the course of action that Jim would pursue. During the weeks since his Socialistic address to them, he had had to stand a good deal of badgering and inquisitive comment, and in some quarters not a little ill-will; all this had the effect of closing his mouth against any confidences, and to friend and foe alike Jim shook his tawny locks and snapped his lips firmly together in an unsatisfactory silence and defiance. This did not

hinder some of the men from advising him to sell his machine to Morgan for as much as he could 'screw out of him;' but others muttered and threatened under their breath as Jim passed through the grimy shop that hot July afternoon, carrying his model carefully wrapped up under his arm.

He heeded neither scowls nor sneers. Once only did his resolute lips tremble a little as he caught a whisper from a pale and nervous man who was listlessly manipulating a glittering bar of steel: 'Jim, Jim lad, noo is your chance to show your grit. I look to you. Stand up for your brithers;' and the dazzle of the steel seemed for an instant to multiply itself before Jim's eyes into quite a lane of straight bright bars.

He stopped at his own corner of the workshop opposite a dusty cobwebbed window through which the sun shone, lighting up the dance of the dust-motes, and, laying down his model on the iron bench, proceeded to fling off his coat previous to commencing work.

Until four o'clock the busy routine of the workshop continued. At that hour, a dapper little clerk, who happened to be Jim's special aversion and upon whom he often lavished the choicest terms of opprobrium in his extensive vocabulary, approached him with a message from Mr. Morgan.

'Hey, you—Bob, Tom, Jim, what's your name?—Borland,—you're wanted in the office immediately!' he said superciliously, pretending to forget his name—on the snobbish principle that it is a mark of dignity not to know the vulgar appellations of men in fustian.

Jim was furious. 'Does your mother know you're out, my bantam?' said he. 'Deliver your message properly, or I'll kick you out of this!'

The clerk turned red with offended dignity.

'I'll let Morgan know how you received his message, my man. He's about sick of your airs and graces.'

Jim took a stride forward, and the little clerk jumped backwards in alarm while the men began to laugh. 'A kick is too good for you,' said Jim disgustedly, returning to his bench and taking up his tools again. 'Tell Morgan that if he wants me, he knows where to find me,' he cried over his shoulder to the fast-retreating clerk, who paused in dismay at the audacity of the message.

'Oh, come, I say! I can't take a message like that, you know. I can't go back'—

'Go to the devil!' cried Jim in a voice of thunder, taking another step towards the little clerk, who, thinking discretion 'the better part of valour,' walked quickly off amid the laughter of the men.

It was evident to Jim's companions that he was labouring under intense inward excitement, and with their curiosity about what he intended to do there now mingled the pleasing anticipation of 'a row.'

Work was resumed, and for half an hour nothing occurred to break the noisy monotony of the work-shop. Then the commanding figure of Mr. Morgan was seen coming rapidly through the shop in search of Jim. There was a pause of expectancy among the men, and the lazier among their number took advantage of the

occasion to settle themselves comfortably to listen to all that might be said.

Mr. Morgan paused in front of Jim's bench. There was no love lost between the two, and Jim could not repress a smile as he saw how difficult the master found it to pocket his pride by coming to seek him before all the men.

'You have chosen a strange place in which to dispose of private business, my man,' said the master with a heightened colour. 'Am I to understand that you wish to settle the matter here and now?'

'Certainly, sir,' replied Jim, who until the unlucky encounter with the clerk had not dreamed of such a thing. But now his quick wit suggested a highly dramatic situation to him—with himself, of course, as the hero! Now the men should see something worth while. He looked so eagerly round that Mr. Morgan at once suspected that a trap was being laid for him, especially when he observed the curiosity and suppressed humour on the faces of the men.

He shrugged his shoulders, and, turning to Jim, said, 'There is no accounting for tastes. As I have no time to waste, I will just repeat my offer for your invention. I offer you a hundred pounds for the sole use and possession of your machine. Your answer, if you please.'

Jim could not resist glancing round to his fellow-workmen with a look of triumph, and there was a sudden movement among them, and a murmur which was lost in a hiss. The master looked about him observantly, his keen eyes evidently taking note of the

whole proceedings, and the men knew that the eagle glances boded no good for some of their number. But all eyes now fixed themselves upon Jim, who drew himself up proudly, his young figure thrown into strong relief by the immense black furnace almost immediately behind him. Jim was quite in his element, for a telling 'situation' of any kind was dear to his heart.

'I am waiting for your answer,' repeated Mr. Morgan, taking his watch from his vest-pocket ostentatiously. He spoke with haughty impatience, vowing inly that once the machine was in his hands this extremely insolent mechanic should be dismissed.

Perhaps Jim read this in his face, or perhaps the knowledge that he was 'the cynosure of all eyes' stimulated him into extraordinary action. At any rate, he swiftly unwrapped the covering from his machine and held it aloft—a glittering, intricate toy—in the gaze of all.

'Behold the curse of the working man!' he cried. 'Behold the idol of oppression and monopoly! and yet the monster was engendered in the brain of an honest working man! Don't you think it a cruel thing, men, that one of yourselves should have endured laborious days and sleepless nights of travail, all to bring forth *this* monstrous birth of the brain? And my doom is to love it!—to glory in it, and yet to fear it!' He turned to the staring men with a look of almost tragic import on his boyish face. 'Work was my deity!' he cried; 'I worshipped it with all my heart. I thought that in the creed of the necessity and nobility of work there was at

all events no humbug nor religious cant, and I set about thinking how best to ennoble it. But it failed me! See, this is the result! this is the image which my inordinate belief engendered, and by this false god of the creed of *Work* shall come my downfall.'

He spoke with such a rushing energy of speech that master and men alike were spellbound before him.

'There came a time,' he resumed, 'when I was cast out of my fool's paradise, and—oh, men!—this emblem of my creed became the flashing sword to guard its closed gates!' He held higher still the shining toy-machine, whose intricate structure of steel and brass scintillated in the dusty sunbeams. 'Yes, it has become a two-edged sword of destruction, and now the only choice I have is upon which keen edge I shall seek my doom. If I choose the one, then farewell for ever to wealth, power, and the liberty to use the brains which are my only capital. If I choose the other, farewell then to peace of mind, to my ideal of the brotherhood of men, to my right to labour with the hands which are a working man's legitimate tools. And there's not one among you,' cried Jim, with a wistful smile which suddenly softened the fierce light in his eyes,—'no, not one, who will give me the credit of choosing the only path possible—the path leading to the greatest sacrifice'—

But the rest of his sentence was lost in a spontaneous cheer from the men, which was instantly suppressed, however, by the keen glance of Mr. Morgan, who now stepped nearer Jim.

'These heroics don't suit business matters,' he said

with a cold sneer. 'I come here willing to give you fair money value for your patent. I suppose that you didn't contrive and make it for nothing. Once more, and for the last time—your answer.'

'This is my answer!' thundered Jim, flinging his model down on the iron bench before him and lifting a hammer high above his head. 'This is my answer,' he repeated, bringing down the hammer upon the delicate machine with a destructive force that shivered it into atoms and startled the master into a sudden lurch backward to escape the wind of the swinging stroke. 'I will *not* give you my machine. I will not take the bread out of my fellow-workmen's mouths to win the curse of their wives and children. I am none of your canting Christian monopolists, but at least I love my fellow-men.'

He swung open the door of the furnace behind him as he spoke, and, hastily collecting the glittering fragments of his machine, he swept them into the fiery heart of the devouring flames. He wheeled round, his figure aglow with the reflection from the huge fire, and, as he flung to the furnace door, he cried aloud like one possessed, 'May the brain which fashioned it burn for ever if I ever again seek to injure my fellow-men.'

The workmen stood like swarthy statues, awed into stillness by the frenzy in their comrade's young face, but Mr. Morgan turned on his heel with an angry and scornful laugh.

'You blasphemous fellow, you are mad!' he said. 'You stand in your own light. You will be the chief loser by this freak, for I have not the slightest doubt that I will

be able to procure another patent possibly better fitted than yours to suit my purpose. I need not say that of course you are dismissed on the spot. I will give you the compensation legally due you in lieu of the usual notice of dismissal.'

He turned to quit the shop, leaving Jim pale and panting with excitement, his only comfort in this dark hour being that by his destruction of the patent he had ensured the continued employment of the men who, in the event of the introduction of the new machinery, would have got their dismissal.

Just as Mr. Morgan reached the door, a groan of derision and a long hiss arrested his steps. He turned sharply round and discovered Kerr and Morrison and some others in the very act of disrespect and insubordination. Rab Reyburn, who as usual was well soaked with whisky, had his finger extended from the exceedingly red and knobby point of his nose in a contemptuous daring which gave the finishing touch of drollery to his caricature of a face—a bit of humour which the master of the foundry could scarcely be expected to appreciate.

'Reyburn—Kerr—Morrison—Muir—Louden!' he exclaimed, enumerating the delinquents with rapid anger, 'I give you notice to quit my employment. You too, Alexander and Glover. What on earth are you grinning at? You low rascals, how dare you insult me in such a manner? I will let it be known, mark my words! You're the worst lot in the shop—drunken fellows!' And therewith he departed, leaving the men whom he had named cursing him under their breath, but too much

in awe of him to give any further audible vent to their feelings.

As for Jim, when he realised that his supreme sacrifice had proved unavailing, when he realised that through his recklessness and foolish love for a scene he had implicated in his own ruin some of the very men whose dismissal he had so impetuously striven to avert, his feelings were indescribable. He lifted his coat, and slowly putting it on, began to gather his tools together in a dazed fashion.

'This is a fine day's wark, Jim Borland,' said Kerr in a tone of bitter upbraiding. 'What am I to say to the mistress when I gang hame? It's a' your faut. We'll hae to pay dear for your whistle, I'm thinkin'.'

But old Hughie Drennan motioned him to be silent, and another of the men stepped up to Jim's downcast figure and laid a horny hand kindly upon his shoulder. 'Jim, lad,' said he with a delicate perception of the young man's sharpest pang in this sore hour of downfall, 'dinna vex yoursel' for us. We'll maybe mak' Morgan laugh on the wrang side o' his mooth yet. We're prood o' the way ye stood up for the working men, but it wasna worth your while to spoil the bit bonnie machine for a' that. Mak' it ower again and seek your fortune some ither gait, lad; no' ane o' us will say ye nay.'

'We'll no' forget hoo ye stood up for us'—

'And didna manage it, Jim,' added the opposing clique as Jim moved slowly and silently between them on his 'via dolōrosa' out of the work.



CHAPTER XXI.

A TRAGIC FAREWELL.

Judge none lost, but wait and see
With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain,
And love and glory that may raise
This soul to God in after days.

A. A. PROCTER.

LATER that same evening Katie Lawson set out to visit Mysie. A fortnight before, Doctor Neaves had come to stay at the Manse, and Mysie had—rather reluctantly, it must be confessed—submitted to his examination of her eyes, with the result that he had declared the cataract which had destroyed her vision quite possible of extraction. The operation, therefore, took place; and through Norman's generous kindness she was placed thereafter under the care of a skilful nurse who came from Glasgow and took up her abode in the little cottage, as old Adam would not hear of Mysie's removal from home.

As Mysie's health was excellent and her disposition singularly favourable to her chances of a speedy recovery, there was every reason to believe that her sight would

soon be restored to her. She was still confined to her darkened room with her eyes closely bandaged, although the doctor had promised to let her test them on an early day. Meanwhile she had been warned to submit in every particular to the nurse's experienced skill and to keep all worry and anxiety at arm's length—an admonition which it was very easy for gentle, patient Mysie to obey.

As Katie Lawson approached the garden gate she saw old Adam leaning against it, smoking his evening pipe.

'Come awa', Mrs. Lawson; I'm gled to see *you*,' said he, making haste to open the gate. 'Jist bide ye a minute or twa till I smoke oot my pipe, for my hoose is no' my ain noo-a-days. That new-fangled nurse o' Mysie's rides ower my heid completely; and, wad ye credit it, she sets me to keep the garden yett ilka nicht efter sax o'clock.'

'What for?' inquired Katie, unloosing her bonnet-strings, for the evening was close and warm.

''Od, to keep the women-folk oot! The hoose is gaun like a hotel wi' kimmers spierin' for Mysie. Ye wad think that my bit lassie was a queen's dochter, sae mony comes to spier efter her health. I was jist thinkin' o' gettin' a bit paper pasted upon the yett wi' the latest bulletin, ye ken, for I'm fair sick stannin' here like a bogle to fear the craws.'

'And hoo is Mysie the nicht?'

'She's verra weel; but I'm thinkin' she'll no' be lang weel when ance she hears the news I hae heard this nicht.'

'What news, Adam, if it's a fair question?'

'Od, that royd lassie Jessie Borland has jist been here, tellin' me that Jim and a wheen mair hae gotten the bag for kickin' up a shine in the foondry the day; and there's a bonnie to-do at hame ower the subject. Jessie says that her father blames Mr. Reid for haein' a finger in the pie.'

'Say ye sae? Hoo's that?' cried Katie anxiously.

'He blames the minister for eggin' Jim up against sellin' his patent to Morgan.'

'Eh me!' interrupted Katie in dismay.

'Ay; and the lad gaed on like a play-actor in the shop, and ended by smashin' his machine and flingin' the bits o't intil the big furnace and lettin' Morgan ken what he thocht o'm. And noo he's for aff to America, and guid only kens hoo Mysie 'll tak' the news. It comes rael hard on a peaceable auld man like me. I'm for haein' peace at ony price at my time o' life, for I'm no' like Morgan, wha's weel kent to be a quarrelsome fellow.'

'Is he?'

'Ay; he has a notion that a row in the work noo and again clears the air—he's a kind o' moral thunderstorm, as ye micht say.'

'Maybe he'll bring doon his thunder and lichtnin' aboot his ain heid yet,' said Katie under her breath. Aloud she said, 'Mysie will be weel quit o' Jim Borland.'

'Eh, if she could be brocht to see it!' ejaculated Adam fervently; 'but lassies are wilfu' craturs. They'll tak' their ain way, and ye canna nail them to the wa' and prune them into the richt direction as if they were cherry trees—mair's the pity! There's Jessie Borland noo; she has aye some daft-like ploy on hand, and 'deed, wi' a' her

religion, she canna help singin' the verra hymns to Mysie as gin they were godless tunes to dance a Scotch reel by. Noo, what do ye think she was tryin' to puzzle my auld brains wi' no' an 'oor syne, Mrs. Lawson?'

'"Deed, Adam, that wad be hard to tell,' said Katie absently, for she was thinking over Norman's alleged complicity in the matter that had led to Jim Borland's dismissal.

'"Weel, uncle, tell me noo," quo' she—jist stannin' swingin' like a bit lassie on this verra yett, Mrs. Lawson, —"dae ye believe that the warl' was really made in sax days, and dae ye think the millennium will ever win the length o' Otterton?" I declare to ye I didna ken whether she was jokin' or in earnest.'

'She's mair need to tak' up her heid wi' things nearer hand.'

'Jist exactly what I telt her! "Jessie," quo' I, "what does the like o' that matter to *you?* Tak' up your heid wi' helpin' your mither among a' yon steerin' weans and wi' ribbons and sic-like women's fal-lals, and leave things o' wecht like the creation and the millennium to the men. It needs a broad and a masculine mind to haud a grup o' the doctrines."'

'The men! save us a'!' cried Katie, unable to resist a fling at Adam's self-complacency. 'Bonnie doctrines the men mak' oot o' the Bible! Broad and wechty, say ye? The feck o' men's minds are aboot as broad as their ain twa feet, and as wechty as their heids on a simmer efternune in the kirk—nae mair!'

'Weel, weel, we'll awa' to Mysie noo. I hae gotten

my fairin' frae ye as usual, Mrs. Lawson,' said Adam, lifting his arms stiffly off the top rail of the little gate whereon he had been leaning; and, after knocking the ashes out of his pipe, he preceded Katie along the garden path to the cottage. 'Dinna let on to Mysie aboot Borland. I'll hae nae time for a langer crack wi' ye the nicht, Mrs. Lawson,' he said as they entered, 'for I maun jist change my coat and awa' to open the hall. This is the prayer-meetin' nicht, ye ken.'

'Yes; I'm gaun too after I hae spoken to Mysie a wee,' said Katie as Adam opened the door and admitted her to the darkened little room where Mysie sat.

An hour later, and another visitor came up the garden path in search of the blind girl.

It was Jim Borland, who had not been at the cottage since the night on which Mysie had so plainly shown him how impassable was the gulf that his unbelief had fixed between them. But now that he had determined to leave the country as soon as possible, he felt that he must take the first opportunity of bidding his sweetheart farewell. He knew that on this evening Adam would be on duty at the prayer-meeting, and he had come on the mere chance of finding her alone. The details of the operation upon her eyes were unknown to him. He had heard that she had a nurse in constant attendance, but he trusted to his wits to find a pretext for speaking to Mysie alone. For once fortune favoured him. The nurse had been persuaded to accompany Katie Lawson to the prayer-meeting, and, as Mysie's friends were familiar with the simple routine of her day and the invalid habits

which necessitated early hours and quietness, no visitors were thought likely to disturb her seclusion.

But while Mysie was sitting in the darkened chamber, meditating in the calm summer evening and feeling somewhat languid and despondent now that she was alone with her thoughts, she heard the click of the garden gate as it fell back on the latch after Jim's unquiet entrance. She recognised his step, hurried and unequal though it was, and her delicate frame, rendered more sensitive by the weakness consequent upon the ordeal she had so recently passed through, thrilled with a faint nervous presage of coming sorrow.

It was with a full heart that Jim walked along the familiar garden path, for he knew that in all probability he was there for the last time.

He saw the rose-bushes that Mysie loved, and noted half-unconsciously how they drooped in the sultry sunset, which turned the luscious raspberries and clustering bunches of the pendent red-currants into jewels that shone like magical rubies amid their cool green setting of foliage. The sky was flushed with western rose, and the level rays from the declining sun were filtering through a haze of filmy yellow, which almost seemed to palpitate in the thunderous atmosphere. Nature was sore athirst for the rain which still delayed its coming, and the song of the Otter was unheard now, for the shallow water oozed languidly from slimy stone to stone, and the grass on the sloping banks was sun-browned and dusty. All this Jim saw as he paused to look over the scorched hedge of sweet-brier at the foot of the garden,

and he turned away with a sigh, his mental disquietude intensified by Nature's oppressed mood.

He walked on, but when he drew near to the cottage door his heart was beating so rapidly that he had to pause a moment to recover himself. Then he knocked softly and entered the familiar room where Mysie stood in nervous expectation of his coming.

At another time, Jim would have been pitifully tender over his blind sweetheart, standing before him so pathetically helpless with her poor eyes bound and hidden from the light; but now he was in such an extreme state of excitement that he plunged without any preface into a rapid description of the scene in the foundry. She groped her way tremblingly to a chair, and sat listening silently and with fast-growing apprehensiveness to Jim's eager tale.

'And now, Mysie,' he concluded sadly, 'I am come to bid you farewell. That is all that remains to be done, for well I know that your precious love is not for the like of me. I must be an alien from love and from home. I am a marked man if I stay here, so I must go away for ever. My dear, dear lassie, my heart is breaking when I think that I'll never see your bonnie open een, and that you'll walk aboot and look upon the faces o' everybody ye ken—but me! Oh, Mysie, in the days to come, think sometimes on rash Jim Borland, for oh, he lo'es ye weel!' He had relapsed into his homely mother tongue as he clasped her slender form to his bosom.

'Oh, Jim, winna ye bide—for my sake, for my sake?' cried she in a shaken voice.

It was Jim who had now to remind her of the obstacles she had placed in the way of their union.

'You forget, my ain Mysie, all that must come to pass before you and I can wed, and I fear that I'm farther from your road to heaven than ever. We must say farewell for ever, my bonnie love.'

He kissed her again and again, while she sobbed and wept, but at length the last fond words were spoken and Jim stood up to depart. 'Oh, Mysie,' he said with a wistful look into her sad face, 'though I shall never see your bonnie grey een when I am far away, I'll be glad to mind that you are no longer blind! Good-bye.' And he was gone.

But Mysie groped her way after him as he left the cottage door.

'Ye *shall* see my een, if that will comfort you in the years to come; and oh, I *maun* see your face ance mair on this side o' the grave!' she cried, suddenly lifting her hands and unloosing the bandage from her eyes before Jim could rush forward to prevent her.

Then she uttered a shriek of pain as the sunset flood of light pierced into her tender eyeballs, and with an indistinct vision of her lover's young figure blurred and dark against the expanse of western red Mysie fell senseless at his feet.

. . . . . .

That was Mysie's first and last look on the light of day. That was the solitary vision she brought back with her into the darkness which was her portion as long as she lived; for irreparable injury had been done

by the premature withdrawal of the bandage from her eyes; and after a season of grief and anxiety, of fluctuating hopes and fears, she emerged from the sick-room to take up, once for all, the burden of blindness, which was at once her cross and her crown.

Jim and she met never more. Theirs was but another of those countless love tragedies which go to swell the sum of the world's pain from day to day. He spends his life abroad in toil and reckless daring, but oftentimes in the lonely hours of his adventurous life a vision of his holy, gentle Mysie visits him, and his heart thrills anew with the fervour of a love that will keep him free from stain till the day of his death; and Mysie in her cottage home prays for him, her petitions liberalised by purifying sorrow—that barrier-breaker of the dogmas which men have raised to hedge the divine truth,—for her faith is boundless that the Father who had sown in Jim's large heart the tiny flax-seeds of the sense of the brotherhood of men, will in His own time weave the fragile fibres into a cable that will draw her lover to his God, who is the source and the permanence of love.



CHAPTER XXII.

CLARA'S CONFESSION.

Where two fight,
The strongest wins, and truth and love are strength.
TENNYSON.

LET us be thankful that the benign influences of a sunny morning are so wonderfully potent to lighten all the manifold burdens of life. For a draught of sparkling morning air invigorates and stimulates our jaded nature and revives our drooping energies, until we half believe that for us all things are possible of accomplishment. Morning is the flood-tide in the affairs of men: then hope soars on eagle pinions, then the ideal which had seemed so unattainable bears us on singing wings of ecstasy to the gates of heaven, and even our sombre sorrows are glorified for the nonce by the tearful aureole of resignation. Let us be thankful, then, for the pure, glad morning; let us act as far as in us lies on the impulses the morning brings, nor paralyse our evanescent energies with the sad reflection that with the evening shall come the ebb-tide of all our morning dreams of great achievements, when the night shall once

more darken about us, thronged with shadowy phantoms of what might have been.

Such, in some measure at least, was the feeling and experience of Mr. Morgan as he descended from his bed-chamber in fresh morning toilet and with a cheerful aspect on the day after the scene in the foundry. As he entered the breakfast-room, where the pleasant sunlight fell upon the well-appointed table, and the scent from the early mignonette was wafted in through the open window whose filmy curtains of lace swayed softly in the light breeze, he was half beguiled into forgetting the disagreeable events of the previous day, which, despite Adam Auld's assertion that he dearly loved a disturbance, had had power to send him to bed in a very troubled and morose frame of mind.

He stepped over to the window with a smile, for on the lawn stood Clara, cool and lovely in her white morning gown, distributing crumbs to the birds who hopped about with saucy chirping and bright eyes, bent on a foraging expedition among the strawberry-beds after this merely superfluous meal of crumbs had whetted the edge of their morning appetite.

Clara looked towards the window, and, upon seeing her uncle standing there, she waved him a greeting, and, flinging away the last handful of crumbs, ran across the lawn. After a moment's pause by the flower-beds to gather some of the dusky crimson orbs of the damask roses which had perfected their beauty in the dewy night, she entered the breakfast-room and took her place opposite her uncle at the table.

'Well, my dear, you look as fresh and trim as a daisy!' was his affectionate greeting as he received from her hand a cup of coffee, fragrant and steaming from the quaint silver coffee-pot flashing in the sunshine.

'I delight in these cool mornings—it is so pleasant to be out of doors before the heat of the day begins,' said Clara. 'I am afraid that this warm weather is making me lazy, though. I am not pleased with myself.'

'But you can afford to be as lazy as you choose, Clara; I want you to have some pleasure in your life now. It reminds me of my boyhood to see you about the place. I can assure you that you have transformed my house into a very pleasant home since your coming. You must never leave me, my dear, until somebody comes to take you to adorn a home of your own.'

Clara looked down at her plate with some compunction. For some time past she had been ill at ease amid all the ease of her uncle's house. With returning health the old determination to pursue art had reawakened, bringing with it an almost unbearable feeling of oppression amid the luxury and enforced idleness of her present sheltered existence, and she had at length decided to appeal to her uncle to let her go back to her former life.

She had hesitated hitherto, knowing how he cherished the hope that she would remain with him; but this, dearly as she loved the pleasant home and her position as its mistress, and much as she grieved to disappoint her uncle, to whom she was truly attached, she was not content to do.

He had striven by every means he could think of to strengthen the ties that bound her to him and Otterton, for he had been quick to observe her growing restlessness and the beating of her wings against the bars of the gilded cage in which he would fain confine her. He had found for her a rival occupation and interest, for by making her the almoner of his bounty to the poor people connected with Free St. John's he imagined that she would forget her wilful desire to go back to art and poverty—two things which were believed by Mr. Morgan to be inseparably connected.

Thus Clara for the first time in her life tasted the divine pleasure of giving to the poor, and thereby she came to understand the unworldly wisdom of the words, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

In this way she found a new pleasure in life, and she had benefited greatly by her closer contact with humanity; but the effect was prejudicial instead of helpful to her uncle's scheme for keeping her with him, for, so far from congratulating herself on her exemption from a life of toil and poverty, she had her eyes opened to the seriousness of life; and all that was best in her rebelled against declining upon mere ease and luxury. She was more than ever bent upon finding out what especial work God had sent her into the world to do; and she believed that it did not lie in Otterton at all events.

The fact that she sometimes met Norman amid these scenes of sadness and reality did much to strengthen this resolve. She loved him as deeply as ever, and, although he made no sign that his love for her still survived, she

could not bear that he should think her a mere butterfly, aflutter upon the breezes of summer.

But now her uncle's words had given her an opening for the announcement of her decision to leave Otterton.

'Uncle,' she said gently, 'I wish to return to Edinburgh. I am quite strong now, thanks to you, and I am growing uneasy about being so long away from my work. This life of ease will unfit me for resuming it, if I don't tear myself away.'

'Now, Clara, be reasonable. There is no necessity for you returning to work. You must just stay where you are. I did not tell you, did I, that I expect to get the plans for a studio for you next week? You can then paint as much as you like;—only stay here, for I really don't believe that I could get on without you now,' said her uncle with an affectionate smile.

'You are far too good to me, uncle, but I feel it impossible to remain here doing nothing.'

'Nonsense!' interrupted he. 'What do you mean by saying that you are doing nothing? Just look at the thousand and one duties you manage to get through! What a difference there is in the house, for instance! And consider your work among the poor! Say no more about going away. I cannot spare you. Besides, it is ridiculous for my niece to go away from her only relative and live by herself in an attic like a—a charwoman. If you only knew how much I have to worry me in the foundry and elsewhere, you would not grudge me the pleasure and solace your presence has brought to my home.'

Clara was touched by this appeal.

'Dear uncle, I would stay if I could; but I desire to be independent and to follow the profession for which I was educated and to which I feel myself called. I think that in it I will find my best chance of benefiting others. I have given up my selfish dream of fame,' said Clara with a very tremulous smile.

'But, dear child, why should you toil? You are just like a lily that does not need either to toil or spin. I have abundant wealth—and I have nobody but you to call my own. Do not leave me.'

It was a strange and touching thing to see this self-assertive and self-reliant man thus pleading with a slip of a girl; but it is only a specimen of the many inconsistencies to be found in this complex human nature of ours. Mr. Morgan's primitive feelings were strong, and now that he had for months experienced the happiness and charm of a woman's presence in his home, he would fain secure it permanently. He saw that Clara was silenced by his appeal.

'You have little idea,' he repeated, 'how much I have got to trouble me. I try to be as just as I can, but I have constant annoyances to endure through the misconduct of reckless blockheads of workmen. I am opposed on every hand. Even the church is getting unpleasant for me since that new minister came. He has turned out a most determined and meddlesome fellow, and now he is pushing forward that club project I told you of, although he knows very well how distasteful it is to me. It is extremely irritating to a man of my position in the town.'

This was by no means the first time that Clara had heard her uncle give vent to his displeasure against Norman, but hitherto she had listened in silence. This morning she ventured to expostulate with him.

'I cannot understand how any one can call Mr. Reid meddlesome. I am sure that he has a good reason for whatever he does,' she said with a blush.

Her uncle felt a sudden impulse of anger against her. Was she too going to oppose him? But he was shrewd enough to perceive that it would not suit his purpose to lose his temper with her; he had no desire thus to defeat his own object. With an effort he restrained his temper, but he pushed back his chair and rose from the breakfast-table with his radiant morning mood irrecoverably dissipated.

'If you knew him as well as I do, my dear,' he said, 'you would be able to endorse my words; but young ladies labour under the delusion that ministers are little short of angelic.'

Clara was nettled at this, and besides, she had long been uneasy because she had led her uncle to believe that she and Norman were merely acquaintances. She looked up with an appealing smile.

'Uncle,' she said, 'I know him better than you think. I knew him well in Edinburgh. We were lovers once.'

The blushes burned upon her face as she made the confession, while her uncle stood looking at her in displeased surprise, wondering inly if this was a specimen of underhand cunning which Clara might have inherited

from her rascal of a father. But her lovely, modest face disarmed his suspicions.

'I suppose that you had a good reason for breaking off the engagement, if there was one?' he inquired.

'I lost his love through my own pride and folly. He was far too good for me,' said Clara simply.

Her uncle was rather taken aback at this plain speaking. He felt that it was scarcely proper for a girl to speak thus frankly.

'Come, come, my dear. He has come over you with his wheedling tongue. But I am glad that the thing is at an end. I do not desire to force your confidence, but I think that you ought to have told me.'

'Yes, I see now that I ought; but pride stepped in there again,' said Clara penitently. 'I thought that he would not like our former relationship to each other to be known.'

'Pooh! He is not the man you think him. An inexperienced girl is not the best judge of the character of any man. I tell you that he is a notoriety-hunter and a hypocrite'—

'Oh, uncle!'

'But he is! In this matter of the club I cannot forgive him. He has deliberately tried to undermine my influence and to damage me in the eyes of my townsmen.'

'But he may think your interests subordinate to some higher end,' expostulated Clara with some show of resentment.

'You know nothing about it, my dear. We will say no more; only you see how much I need you here,' said

her uncle, glancing at the timepiece. 'But it is post-time; I must be off to the office.'

After her uncle was gone Clara rang the bell for the maid to remove the breakfast equipage, and, going into the hall, she took her garden hat and parasol and escaped from the house into the green seclusion of the beech avenue. She wanted to be alone with her thoughts.

As she walked up and down, pondering over the widening breach between her uncle and Norman, she foresaw trouble ahead for the latter. She had observed how steadily her uncle's dislike for him had grown, until at last he seemed actually to have acquired a relish for the persecution to which—as he sometimes boasted—it was his duty as a ruling elder zealous for the purity of the church to subject the minister. Clara was thus rendered very unhappy. She saw with pain how gravely this inordinate hatred was warping her uncle's nature, and she sorrowed for Norman, who had to submit as patiently as he could to Mr. Morgan's persecution. She knew the young minister too well to believe that he had deliberately set himself to annoy her uncle. She had the fullest faith in the purity of his motives in the matter of the club, and, moreover, she was not blinded to the faults in her uncle's character. In her visiting among the poor she had been obliged to hear much to his disadvantage even from those who were benefited by his charity. He gave of his substance to them because it was a mark of his superiority and a respectable thing to do, and the recipients were quick to perceive this. With far different feelings did they welcome their young

minister among them, and Clara saw it. Everywhere she came upon precious evidences of the affectionate regard in which he was held, and when she met him going his unassuming rounds among the poverty-stricken and suffering, again and again she admired and wondered at his devotion to his sacred calling. During the past months, while she had sat in her uncle's pew and listened to Norman preaching, her eyes had been opened to a clearer discernment of the truths he expounded and illustrated by his own sterling Christianity; and the consequence was that her love for him was deepened, and she began to look upon him with reverence—a feeling which had been entirely lacking in it before.

Her love lost its purely personal character and became a sacred thing. It was this that endued her with the impulse to benefit the poor in other ways than the conventional methods prescribed for her by her uncle; and gradually her presence became eagerly longed for and welcomed in many a sick-room, and her sweet voice singing holy psalms or timidly speaking words of heavenly import to the dying, became familiar music in the sad dwellings of want and sin that abounded in Otterton.

Thus did Clara's human love, purified from the dross of selfishness, ennoble her; thus did it point her to the Divine Love—that unquenchable sun of which human affection is but an earth-befogged ray; thus was she gently led to seek the kingdom of God. Happy is she to whom the gift of a pure human love has proved the light shining full upon the road that leads to the soul's eternal home. For her is heaven begun on earth.

And yet Clara sought no means of winning Norman back to her side. Her love, for the time being, sufficed her. It was too high and pure a thing to stoop to natural wiles and womanly allurements. She was emptied of her pride and egotism, and now she was content to do angels' work below in weakness and in loneliness.

Yet God was using that very weakness to perfect His strength. He was drawing her to Himself; and Norman, whose love for her was as deep as it was patient, saw the spiritual meanings that were dawning on her lovely face, giving the soft brown eyes a gentler light and irradiating the quiet smile with an exquisite glow of emotion, and he took the sign from God with a joy unspeakable, for it meant to him that his beloved was at last one with him in soul, and now he looked forward to the happy time when they should greet each other, renewing their troth and taking upon them nobler and holier marriage vows than either had dreamed of.





CHAPTER XXIII.

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.'

Death doth make us draw together,
Like weary birds in the wild weather,
Till we scarcely know
The once dread difference of feather
We felt so much a little ago.

ROBERT W. BARBOUR.

IT is almost needless to say that from the first Mr. Borland, the ruling elder's faithful henchman, had modelled his bearing and conduct towards the young minister on those of his chief and employer.

During the earlier weeks of Norman's settlement in Free St John's, when Mr. Morgan could not speak too highly of 'the excellent young man' of their choice, it had not been easy for Borland to follow suit, for Norman had never been a favourite with him; and, had he not deemed it expedient to take his cue from the ruling elder in all church matters, he would even have opposed Norman's election tooth and nail.

He rejoiced, therefore, when he observed that Mr. Morgan, at the first sign of independent action on the

part of the young minister, withdrew his countenance from him. Borland watched the change from its first beginnings in coldness and stiffness till its climax in the rancorous hostility it had by this time—the month of August—reached, and he added his quota of venom to the persecution which was being persistently waged against the minister at the session-meetings. And it had been a matter of satisfaction to him to discover at length, as he thought, a personal grievance that gave him a pretext for indulging the grudge he bore against him.

About a fortnight after Jim's departure for America, Norman had met his father in the street, and, all unconscious that he was treading on dangerous ground, had stopped him to inquire whether he had yet heard from his son. Thereupon Borland roundly charged him with being the main cause of Jim's dismissal from the foundry and even of his leaving the country; arguing that, if Norman had used his influence aright, and if he had but seconded the sound advice he himself had given his son, and had not interfered presumptuously in the affair of the disposal of his invention,—a business question of which a minister could not be expected to have any practical knowledge,—Jim would have been still at home—a help and a credit to his family, instead of having been forced into the vagabond career of an emigrant.

In vain Norman represented that all he had counselled Jim to do was to take advice from those who were competent to give it—a thing which he did not pretend to

be able to do—and thereafter to obey the dictates of his conscience.

Borland—who doubtless considered that conscience should be taught to know its place in matters strictly commercial—would not listen to Norman; he proceeded to accuse him of setting children against their parents and of undermining the foundations of parental authority. He further asserted that in the matter of religion, instead of urging upon Jim the propriety and advantage of connecting himself with the church, Norman had as good as told him that it did not make any great difference whether he went to church or not; and as for Jessie!—since she at her mother's desire had called upon him at the Manse, seeking for spiritual guidance, she was, if possible, more flighty and unsettled in her convictions than before!

From these more personal grievances Borland proceeded to 'cleanse his stuffed bosom of the perilous stuff' of his general dissatisfaction with Norman as the minister of Free St. John's. There are always such over-zealous busybodies in connection with a large congregation, and woe betide the minister who finds himself, like the unwilling wedding-guest in 'The Ancient Mariner,' buttonholed by the 'skinny hand' and transfixed by the 'glittering eye' of any such most persistent bore.

According to Borland, the minister neglected to preach the good old solid doctrines of the Catechism; he did not give a true and full presentation of God's character; he made salvation a thing far too easy of attainment. Altogether, in the estimation of this big-little man,

Norman's religion was far too light and gay, and did not impart to the demeanour and character of the young people especially that sobriety and gravity which should distinguish true Christians; and he was good enough to tell Norman plainly that whatever popularity he had was among the young, and that he owed it entirely to this easy and shallow religion; and he begged to remind him—this with much acrimony of speech—that these foolish young people contributed little or nothing to the church funds; and he added further—for his budget of grievances was as miscellaneous as the contents of a beggar's wallet—that the new minister was fast alienating the heads of families by his lax teaching, and shocking the richer members by his ignorant championship of the poor and disreputable. And yet this was a working man and a professed follower of the humble Carpenter of Nazareth!

Norman might well listen with shame and sorrow to this sordid 'stoop o' the kirk,' who, after making a bitter complaint that the collections on the Sabbaths were beginning to dwindle, concluded his tirade with a text-besprinkled exhortation in which he called upon Norman to reverse his system of preaching, lest he should quickly bring prosperous Free St. John's to ruin.

Norman defended himself with considerable spirit, but there was just sufficient truth in some of the above accusations to make him feel them very keenly and attach an exaggerated importance to them. The attendance of the older people and the amount of the church-door collections had undoubtedly been smaller of

late, but that was due to circumstances which had no connection with his preaching.

For one thing, the heat had become almost unbearable, and, as the church was insufficiently ventilated, it was as much as the young and strong could do to endure the oppressive atmosphere; and, moreover, trade was at a low ebb in Otterton. Two of the largest employers of labour had lately become bankrupt and been compelled to close their works, while several other factories were on short time, the consequence being that some hundreds of people were thrown out of employment and many more were earning reduced wages.

Affairs in Otterton had indeed come to a pretty miserable pass; and towards the end of July the culminating point of wretchedness was reached when there broke out a rapidly-spreading epidemic of low fever in the Waterside district, induced by the prolonged season of heat and drought combined with the effluvia that arose from the almost stagnant waters of the Otter, no means of flushing which had as yet been discovered notwithstanding the frequent recurrence of such seasons.

Norman had intended to take a month's holidays during August—for he stood greatly in need of a short period of rest wherein to recruit his jaded energies—and to spend them quietly at Rothesay with his mother, but now he felt himself compelled to remain at his post and do what he could to comfort and relieve the families stricken with the fever.

All through the sultry days the sun beat down upon the crowded and stifling dwellings; and in the evenings,

when the inhabitants languidly lounged at their doors to obtain fresher air, their lungs were poisoned by the pestilential vapours from the sluggish stream. It was a wretched time, for numbers of unemployed men and girls hung about, and the lurking fever found an easy prey in their half-starved, emaciated frames.

Norman, of course, was not alone in his ministry of mercy, for, besides the regular doctors and ministers of the town, there were many men and women who nobly volunteered their services during this time of necessity.

In an emergency such as this, Norman was no stickler for 'church etiquette;' he went in and out among the afflicted people, regardless whether they belonged to his own or indeed to any congregation, for his sympathies were as non-conservative as the rain which blesses with its impartial showers broad fields and trim gardens, nor disdains to refresh the tiniest ragged vetch that climbs the dusty hedges of the highway.

Among the first to be prostrated by the fever was the wife of Robert Borland.

One morning he was awakened by a low moaning from his sleeping wife. He was a kind if somewhat stern husband, and the thought that perhaps 'the mistress' was taking the fever chilled him with a great dread. He gently awoke her.

'Mary,' said he, 'what ails ye?'

'Is it time to get up, Robert? My heid is heavy,' she said, raising herself feebly upon her elbow, but immediately sinking back with a moan. 'I doot I'm no' able to get up.'

'No' able to get up! You're no' gaun to be ill, surely!' exclaimed the husband in consternation.

'No' if I can help it, Robert,' said she with a wan smile. 'If I had a cup of tea'—

'Here, Jessie, Jessie, get your mother a cup of tea as fast as you can!' cried he, walking across the floor and opening the door to shout to his daughter in the kitchen. He was thoroughly alarmed. He could not recollect a time when his active wife had been thus indisposed.

'Lie doon, Mary,' he said in a softer tone than usual as he straightened the coverlet with clumsy hands. 'We canna afford to hae ye ill, my bonnie woman.'

The doctor was sent for and he pronounced the illness to be a case of fever, and before night the heart of the husband was wrung by the frenzied ravings that fell from the lips of his prostrate wife.

How pathetic they were—those petty cares which still dominated the weary brain of the overworked wife and mother! The husband sat by her bedside in the silent watches of the hot night, listening with a swelling heart to the tale of the constant succession of small worries comprised in the lot of the average working man's wife, —the unfinished ironing, the undarned socks lying in the overflowing work-basket, the little frocks and pinafores whereon she frantically wrought in her delirium. All the common every-day cares of the home haunted her fever-stricken brain, and were tragic and no longer trivial in the ears of the listening husband.

Norman, who saw no reason why his difference with her husband should keep him from visiting the sick

woman, called on the day after he had heard of her illness, and Borland, subdued by the presence of distress in his house, gave him a shamefaced welcome, inwardly respecting Norman for thus ignoring everything except the gracious charity which 'suffereth long and is kind.'

He was constant in his attendance during the weary days that followed, and because the poor wife looked forward to his visits her husband was glad to see the young minister's tall form darken his door. Many comforts were introduced into the sick-room by Norman in such an unassuming manner that the husband could not resent his kindness, and with satisfaction Norman at length perceived that Borland's ill-will was passing away.

At last the fever reached its crisis, and, after a night of anxious watching, the pale, spent mother crept back out of the dread 'valley of the shadow of death.' But now the insatiable fever seized upon the youngest member of the house—the mother's darling, little three-year-old Robert,—dear also to the undemonstrative father because he was his name-son and a merry little fellow who showed less awe of him than any other of his children. The little one took the fever, and this time death would not be balked of his prey.

Ah, why should this pen of mine lacerate the hearts of the many mothers who know the grief of losing a little child by detailing the mournful story of the illness and death of 'Wee Robin,' as he was fondly called? Do not they know the sorrow by experience? And to those happy mothers who know it not, no words of mine would

be powerful enough to make them realise the terrible blank left in a mother's bosom by such a loss.

This poor mother sat alone, pale and weak from her recent illness, filling the silence of the death-chamber with the tearless moaning of intense grief; gazing dumbly upon the tiny waxen figure which was no more her merry little son; trying with a yearning heart to follow his baby-flight into the unknown; bending with lips that faltered into endearments that now were powerless to bring a smile into the still face that had never before failed to dimple into laughter beneath the tender mother-kisses. But now he lay unresponsive and far away from the need of her love. . . . . .

Oh, mothers whose mourning lips have been touched with the live coal from off this ever-burning altar of pain, take heart, for that pain will become to you a key to unlock the gates of heaven! 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,' and you are blessed among women, inasmuch as you possess a child for ever young, awaiting you Beyond!

Throughout the days when this household had been thus sorely made acquainted with grief, Norman had come and gone—a welcome visitor. The mother could tell of many tender words of comfort and helpfulness which he had spoken, of many prayers sent forth from his pitiful heart to God for her and her family; and Jessie also participated in the benefits of this time of grief. She was subdued into unwonted quietness and thoughtfulness, and she perseveringly set herself to perform the many household duties which were too arduous

as yet to be undertaken by her mother's feeble hands. She kept the children quiet and attended to her father, pleased and rewarded if a smile or a word of encouragement from Norman fell to her share.

She began to apprehend that there was something better worth living for than self with all its indulgences, whether spiritual or carnal. She pondered over and obtained occasional glimpses of the meaning of that little word but mighty principle of action—duty.

And as she watched with growing reverence the efforts that the young minister made to help not only those in her own home but also the many fever-stricken people around the doors, she was touched with a passionate desire to emulate the example thus set before her. Poor girl, she had yet to be led by the painful path of personal suffering into the narrow way wherein the humble-minded only can safely walk.

Borland's heart had been thoroughly softened and changed towards Norman, and on the night before little Robin was to be carried to his grave, he spoke to the minister, who was present in the house.

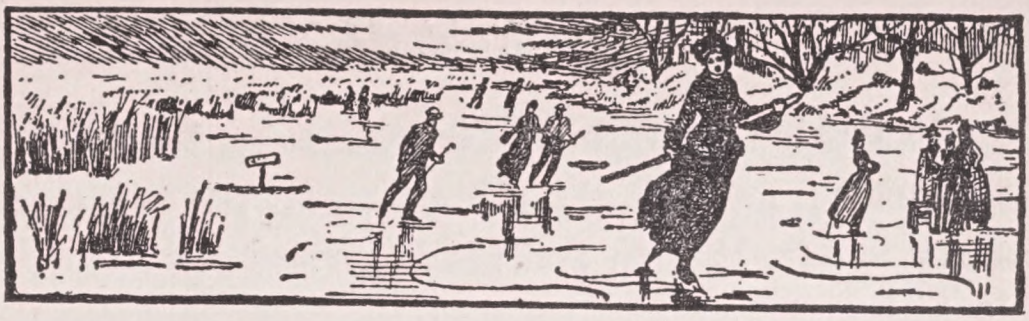
'Mr. Reid,' he said, standing up in the dimly lighted room, where upon a white-draped table stood the tiny coffin, 'ye hae dune to me and mine what few men, let them be ministers or no', wad hae dune in the circumstances. Ye cam' here like the Lord Himsel' into the hoose o' ane that reviled ye, and I want to tell ye that never mair will I open my mouth to speak against sic a servant o' God. Forget my words in the street and at

the session-meetin's, sir, and gie me your hand as a token o' forgiveness ower the little chap's coffin.'

Norman held out his hand, and his eyes grew moist.

'Ah, friend,' he said, 'sorrow and death bring men very near to the eternal realities. All the petty differences which have such a power to sting the worldly heart and keep us apart, fall away from us then. I am glad to shake hands with you in this sacred presence.'

'Sir, sir! ye heap "coals o' fire" upon my heid!' said Borland in a voice from which tears were not very far away.



CHAPTER XXIV.

A STORMY MEETING.

Often a man's own angry pride
Is cap and bells for a fool. TENNYSON.

TO him who bravely puts his shoulder to the wheel and moves, if but by an inch, the rut-stayed vehicle that carries the true and manifold interests of his little world, is given the divine consciousness that he is working in the line of progress, order, and ultimate perfection. His strength is founded upon a rock even although his outer man pursues its way in weakness and disappointment among his fellows.

It was well for Norman that he had this inner strength, for troubles were fast thickening around him and his physical strength was well-nigh spent.

It is true that his quiet and unremitting labours among the fever-stricken people of the Waterside had given him — in their eyes at least—the aspect of a ministering angel and a 'brother beloved;' and that many a warm hand-clasp from kind-hearted people and many a cheerful word of approbation came like beams of

blessed sunshine athwart his darkening sky, but his heart was often sore within him because of the unrelaxing hostility of Mr. Morgan and his followers.

It had gathered virulence as the days went on, and now by this time—the end of August—it had assumed such proportions as rendered the stray sunshine of good-will a mere ineffectual light to show the breadth and gloom of the gathering clouds.

No outward silence could heal the wound of that relentless and strange enmity, and the young minister had for his only support the all-sustaining 'angels' food' with which God feeds His faithful servants in the desert.

As for Mr. Morgan—if we may take the liberty of trying to read his thoughts as he walked in his garden one evening at this time—he had rolled his animosity so long 'like a sweet morsel under his tongue,' that its first agreeable flavour had given place to the underlying and native bitterness of such a state of feeling.

The very mention of the young minister's name was an offence to him, and, like the presentation of the proverbial red rag to the bull, was at all times sufficient to rouse him to a perfect fury of rage. He had actually brought himself to believe that the dignified silence or occasional mild protests with which Norman met all his assaults were but the tactics of one who wanted to make the most of the opportunities afforded him of posing as a martyr, for by this time Mr. Morgan's hostility had become a matter of notoriety in the town, and its latest developments were openly discussed.

Now, the ruling elder was keenly alive to the value of

public opinion; he lived in the belief that all he said and did was of importance in the eyes of his townsmen, and their good opinion was absolutely necessary to him. But now he had reason to suspect that the breath of popular appreciation was being succeeded by a wind of adverse criticism, and he noticed this more especially in the session-meetings, where his persecution of the young minister had become so openly persistent that it disgusted and disquieted those of the members not of his following.

Although the knowledge that this was so seemed to goad Mr. Morgan into an even more forcible expression of his enmity, in his heart he felt dismayed at the demoralisation that the cherished hatred was rapidly working within him. Nothing now gave pleasure to his soul; the Sabbath services in which he was wont spiritually to revel, the prayer, the reading of the Word, the meetings in connection with Free St. John's—all were now 'flat, stale, and unprofitable' to the once fervid elder, and he was haunted at times by a feeling as of coming retribution.

The masterful man, in fact, had lost the mastery of himself. He had given over the reins of management to the devil; and once a man does that, he thinks little of overleaping whatever opposing obstacles his rebellious conscience may for a time raise to stay his headlong course to perdition.

And now he had reached the point of considering how this ministerial bugbear could be removed out of his path. He felt that a climax in his relationship to Norman was fast approaching.

Either the minister must be made to feel Otterton too hot for him, or—but what the alternative was he had not decided on, for at that moment the sound of voices passing on the other side of the garden wall attracted his attention.

'Auld Harry ower the wa' there is showin' the cloven hoof now for a' his great to-do aboot religion,' said one voice. 'He'll sune mak' the place brimstane hot for the new minister, if somebody doesna hinder him.'

'Just hooly a wee,' responded the other. 'Mr. Reid has a friend even at Brimstane Ha', or I'm mista'en. They say that Miss Porteous'—

The speakers passed on, leaving Mr. Morgan in a new rage of hatred against Norman. Could there be any truth in what they had implied about Clara? he wondered. Was it possible that she had deceived him when she told him that all was over between herself and Mr. Reid? That a niece of his should have her name thus bandied about in public gossip! The thought was unbearable. And, after all, he knew so little about her; she might be underhand and deceitful like her father—and her *mother*, he added, wincing under the thought.

The fellow must not be allowed to remain in Otterton, that much was abundantly plain. He—Mr. Morgan—would at once press before the Presbytery the charge of heterodoxy, and he would substantiate it too! Borland and some others would help him to do that. Thus would he rid himself of the minister's hateful presence. The fellow actually made him feel like a savage. Then his peace of mind and his popularity would return. Once

more he would be the religious and zealous ruling elder, the unexceptional master among his men, the important, powerful citizen.

He entered the hall briskly, and hanging up his garden-hat on the rack, replaced it by a more formal headgear, and with staff in hand and an extra swing of his substantial shoulders, he took his way along the populous Waterside and up through Queen Street to the session-house of Free St. John's, to take his place at a meeting about to be held.

Norman had come thither mainly because he intended to make to the members of session an appeal which, although he was well aware that it would be very distasteful to Mr. Morgan, his strong sense of the urgent necessity of the situation forbade him to leave unspoken. He shrank with more than usual repugnance from the prospect of encountering the elder's opposition. The heavy work of the past month and the saddening duties in connection with the fever epidemic had almost broken down his strong health, and that evening he was exceedingly worn-out and despondent; therefore he would gladly have deferred this painful duty, especially as he very soon became aware that Mr. Morgan's animosity was directed against him with an added barb of acrimony.

Others present at the meeting also noted this, and in the minds of several gentlemen a strong feeling of indignation towards Mr. Morgan was silently asserting itself.

It had been long felt to be a cruel and unfair persecution springing from a personal animus, and on that evening, although the wily elder was careful to preface

his attack with an apologetic reference to his well-known zeal for the church, much feeling against him was smouldering in the meeting; for Norman's noble and indefatigable labours among the fever-stricken, and his countless deeds of charity, were well known to many gentlemen present.

At length the formal business of the evening was concluded, and Norman, rising to his feet, looked round and said,—

'Gentlemen, before we separate, I have an appeal to make. As you know, the epidemic is still spreading and there is a great deal of distress and poverty among the people. I think that we should organise a relief fund for providing the most necessitous families with medicine and food. I know that many will be glad to give of their abundance for such an object, and I have therefore drawn out a list of these most necessitous cases.'

He placed on the table before him a slip of paper, and Mr. Morgan, reaching forth his hand, picked it up.

After looking over it a moment in silence he glanced up indignantly, holding the paper at arm's length, and, pointing to the name that headed the list, he exclaimed,—

'This Latto—he is a free-thinker, an atheist, a propagandist of infidel opinions, a pest to the town. Is that the sort of man you expect us to help, Mr. Reid?'

'He will not be a pest to the town much longer. He is dying,' replied Norman solemnly, 'and he leaves six little children upon the world. Why should we judge him? Let us leave him to an all-comprehending God.'

'God will give him a well-merited portion of hell-fire! How dare you make light of the judgments of God—you, a minister of the gospel?'

There was a movement among the assembled gentlemen and a murmur of dissent. But Mr. Morgan continued,—

'What is this? Robert Reyburn's family! Really, Mr. Reid, you are going too far. You can scarcely expect me or any other employer of labour here to help a man who has been dismissed from my works for insubordination. He is a drunken, dissolute fellow!'

'But Christian charity should ignore small personal considerations,' rejoined Norman.

'*Small* personal considerations! The fellow is the bane of my existence. He puts himself in my way on purpose to annoy me; he makes mischief among the men; and yet you call this a *small* personal consideration! What do you know of the daily worries of business men? But it is just like you to balk me at every turn!' exclaimed Mr. Morgan with bitter emphasis. 'You have contrived to lessen my influence in the church, and you use every means in your power to thwart and aggravate me. You were the means of stirring up strife in my foundry soon after your coming. Mr. Borland here'—he turned impetuously towards Robert Borland, who sat behind him with his eyes fixed on the floor—'will corroborate my statement; you instigated his son in his rebellion against authority, you were the chief cause of his disgraceful conduct. Speak, Borland!' cried he in a frenzy of rage. 'You were glib enough to *me* about the affair!'

'I am sorry that ever I uttered a word against Mr. Reid,' said Borland in a clear, slow voice. 'I apologised to him for it over the coffin of my little child, and I am glad of this chance of making a more public acknowledgment of my regret and injustice.'

Norman lifted his bowed head and looked at Borland gratefully.

'What, sir! you have turned your coat?' cried the angry elder. 'What have you to gain by it, I should like to know? Not wages or work, at any rate. I suppose that Mr. Reid has cajoled you into'—

'Gentlemen, I appeal to you all to protect me from this outrageous attack!' interposed Norman, fronting the meeting indignantly. 'I came among you, sent by God, as I believe, to work for Him, and I fear no man as long as He approves of my conduct. But this evening I am not feeling well enough to submit to such a gratuitous display of the rancorous hostility which is poisoning my life here. It takes the very heart out of me!'

Norman stopped abruptly and sat down in a chair, overcome for the moment, as a murmur of sympathy fell upon his ears. Angry looks were cast at the heated visage of Mr. Morgan, who stood stiff and tall against the door, glaring at Norman.

'I'll stand by you, Mr. Reid!' said a member of session, stepping forward to Norman's side. 'We can no longer tolerate such unseemly and tyrannical procedure on the part even of Mr. Morgan. We are indebted to him in many ways, but he is going beyond his province thus to attack you and push himself forward as the

spokesman of the session. He is *not* our mouthpiece!' continued the gentleman with quiet energy. 'More good has been done by you, Mr. Reid, during the short time you have been here than I have seen done in Otterton the whole thirty years I have lived in it. You can make use of my purse in these necessitous cases;—these poor people owe much to you. We are proud of you, and may you be long spared to work among us. Do not let this temporary annoyance drive you away. We shall tolerate no more of such unseemly and unmerited persecution here.'

The words were like balm to Norman's wounded spirit.

'I also will be glad to help you, Mr. Reid,' said a second gentleman, quietly putting his name down for a donation and passing the paper round with a nod. Several gentlemen rapidly followed his example, and Mr. Morgan, feeling completely baffled and set aside, opened the door of the session-house, and, turning to Norman, shook his fist at him in almost speechless passion.

'I'll make you answer for this!' he at last exclaimed; 'and you too, sir!' he added, wheeling round to the gentleman who had so warmly and conspicuously espoused Norman's cause. 'You are all leagued together against me; but I will appeal to the Presbytery to make a strict inquiry into the purity and orthodoxy of the pulpit ministrations in Free St. John's. Mark my words!'

So saying he passed out of the meeting, followed by some slight hissing, and soon thereafter the gentlemen dispersed, taking leave of Norman with many warm assurances of their esteem.



CHAPTER XXV.

DE PROFUNDIS!

O fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong. LONGFELLOW.

ALTHOUGH Norman had so manfully held his own against his accuser in the session-house, the parting threat flung after him by the infuriated elder weighed on his spirits as he walked homeward down the Waterside.

He had had a long and saddening day among the fever-stricken people, and the exciting scene in the session-house had left him faint and dizzy with emotion. He almost staggered among the withered tufts of herbage and sun-bleached stones of the parched and arid road.

He drew his hand helplessly across his hot brow. He wondered if he was going to take the fever,—that would account for the strange feeling of giddiness and nausea that again assailed him.

Slow tears welled into his weary eyes as he stumbled on, thoroughly unmanned. His courage failed him, his very faith wavered.

'O God, why am I persecuted so vindictively? Have I not done all for Thee?' he demanded in passionate prayer as his gaze sought the lurid, rainless sky.

He bowed himself upon the railing of the low and rickety wooden bridge that spanned the Otter at the foot of the Waterside, and for a moment resigned himself to despair. The bed of the stream was almost dry, and among the fœtid ooze and the whitened stones lay rank pools of stagnant water. He moved uneasily as he breathed the noxious odour, and, lifting his head, he allowed his eyes to travel wearily along the twin rows of houses.

On the doors of the fever-stricken houses a red cross had been daubed by order of the Local Authority, and mechanically Norman commenced to count the ominous symbols, dimly discernible through the gathering dusk.

'Six more since last night!' he muttered. 'If the rain delays much longer, the Waterside will be full of dead people.'

The faint click of a loom reached his ears—it was the significant sign of a dying industry; a woman's wailing cry sounded along the silent way; a few languid children dabbled sticks to stir the rats from their slimy refuges in the banks of the Otter.

'"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope,"' said Norman drearily. 'This is a God-forgotten place.'

Suddenly the earth seemed to vibrate beneath his feet; there was a distinct rumbling noise far up the Otter, and

as he gazed, startled and vaguely afraid, he saw afar a frantic horseman bounding along the northern bank of the river, bearing aloft a streaming red flag. As he drew nearer, Norman heard his voice shouting in deep and loud monotony, 'The water's comin' doon!' 'The water's comin' doon!' was his cry as he rushed along; and lo! there by his side, fast outstripping his desperately-galloping horse, rolled and thundered an immense brown wall of foam-flecked water! A water-spout had burst in the hills where the Otter had its source, and now its narrow and shallow channel was overflowing to its sloping banks.

'Off the brig, man! You'll be swept awa'!' yelled the horseman as he flashed past Norman, who stood on the bridge astonished and almost overpowered by the intense effluvia which rushed along with the disturbed water. He felt the wooden structure trembling beneath him as the flood struck it, and he had barely time to reach the bank when, with a wrench and a shriek of parting timbers, it was whirled down the stream.

The inhabitants of the Waterside, roused by the cries of the messenger as he rode past, hurried out of doors, snatching the children who were playing on the banks of the stream. They stood aghast before the impetuous flood, and waited on the edge of the swirling, filthy waters to see if they could not save some of the floating treasure. From the fields far up the Otter there came tossing hayricks and stately trees. Countless objects of value went floating past. Hencoops with their ruffled occupants, pigs sorely dismayed, and bleating sheep, too

terrified to allow themselves to be rescued by the outstretched hands of rope-encircled men, were hurried onward to destruction.

It was an hour of terrible elemental power, and Norman stood appalled, praying inly that human lives might not be sacrificed, when, looking up the river, he saw rapidly gliding downward an upturned, ghastly face, half-concealed by swaying masses of long black hair.

'My God! it is a woman!' he cried, tearing off his coat and shoes and plunging into the river. His nervous arms frantically divided the flood as he swam against the current towards the floating figure. He was almost too late, but, as it was being borne past at lightning speed, he made a desperate effort and caught hold of a strand of the streaming hair, and then rescued and rescuer alike were swept onward together past the shouting crowds on the green, receding banks of the mighty river.

The sudden pain caused by his grasp seemed to have averted the moment of death for the poor creature he held.

'Let me droon! ye'd better let me droon!' she gasped ere once more she sank into unconsciousness.

'Jessie, Jessie! Oh, is it you?' cried Norman, horrified. He rapidly looked down the stream. He noticed a projecting alder tree, which he knew stood right opposite the Manse garden-wall, and as he and his helpless burden were gliding past he blindly caught hold of the swaying boughs. Thank God! they sustained the

strain thus put upon them. He paused an instant to concentrate his fast-failing strength, and then with a superhuman effort he dragged his burden on to the grass beyond the margin of the flood, wondering vaguely if Jessie was dead as he sank fainting by her side.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself lying in his own bed at home, in the luxurious stillness of the night.

The rain had come at last and was beating against the streaming window with an ever-increasing vehemence, and the wind was driving a tempest of rain-swept boughs against the panes.

Soon the door of his room was gently opened and Katie approached his bed, peering into the fire-lit gloom with an anxious face. He smiled and put out his hand as she bent over him. Katie grasped it with a sob of relief.

'Oh, Norman, my ain bairn!' she exclaimed, forgetful of the years that had gone since last she had called him by that endearing name. 'What for did you risk your life? Was there naebody but you to jump into that awfu' water? What wad I hae said to your mither gin ye had been'— She broke off with another sob.

He drew the faithful old face gently down and kissed the wrinkled cheek.

'But I'm not drowned, Katie,' he said. 'Is Jessie dead?'

'God forbid! Ye hae saved her life. She's lyin' on the parlour sofa, whingin' to see ye, although I telt her that ye were mair dead than alive on her accoont.

She keeps sayin' that she maun see ye, and she's like to gang fair demented. Puir thing! it's a miracle to see her livin',' added Katie with compunction.

'I must see her, I suppose,' said Norman wearily. 'Have you told her people that she is here?'

'Yes, I sent word at ance; and sair put aboot auld Borland was when he cam' and saw her lyin' so white and drookit. It's my opinion he's something on his conscience aboot her. I've sma' faith in men-folk whase piety rins to roarin' i' the prayers as his does. The Lord's no' deaf that ever I heard tell o'; He disna need to be roared at as gin He was a foreigner that doesna understand a decent language. Borland's lassie has been misguided at hame, I wadna wonder; and I jist took it upon me to tell her father that he was to let her mither ken that Jessie wad bide wi' me the nicht; she's no' fit to gang oot ower the door.'

'You were quite right, Katie. I think you had better tell her that I will see her in about an hour. Be kind to her, Katie.'

'Hoot awa', Norman! I wadna hurt the silly lammie. But I wish she had been saved by some ither body and at some ither body's door. I wish ye mayna be the waur o' this,' said she as she left the room.

It was with an effort that Norman rose, and, shaking off his increasing languor, sought Jessie in the parlour. His head was full of strange noises, and his hands trembled as he fumbled with the handle of the door. He entered the room, but he was only half-conscious of

Jessie's wistful eyes and tear-stained face as he took her hand encouragingly and sat down by the sofa on which she reclined.

'I'll tell ye everything!' she cried impetuously. 'Dinna think I wanted to droon mysel', although I said *yon* to ye! Oh, help me to be better! help me to be guid! will ye no'? for I've been so near death that a'thing looks different noo.'

Norman tried to soothe her, but he shrank from the excited mood of this poor distressed girl who demanded so much from him—who looked to him for guidance with such a passionate faith, such a passionate need in her eyes.

'I'll tell ye everything,' she repeated. 'I hinna been at the dressmakin' a' week because o' wee Robin's death, and this efternune I gaed oot and left my mither in the hoose her lane. I tried to bide in, but I couldna—no, I couldna, for I was feared when she grat low in to hersel' and gaed aboot gatherin' Robin's toys to put them oot o' sicht; an' ance she cried loud when she saw his shoon lyin' beside his wooden horsie, and I couldna bear it, and I gaed oot and awa' to the plantin' whaur it was green and bonnie, and there I fell in wi' John Logan. I made nae tryst, for I didna ken I wad be there mysel'; but he was kind to me, and I forgot the time, until the sun gaed down and it was on the edge o' the mirk. Then I was feared to gang hame, for I kent that my father wad be in frae the meetin'. But I summoned up courage at last, and when I cam' to the door my father was waitin' for me and he shut the door in my face,

and telt me to gang whaur I cam' frae, for I was a disgrace to him,'—poor Jessie's voice was almost incoherent with sobbing;—'he said I was a disgrace to him, for I had been seen walkin' i' the plantin' wi' John Logan, and wee Robin jist twa days in his grave and my mother ill. So I turned awa' to cross the steppin'-stanes to my grannie's house, and when I was aboot the middle o' the ford, the water cam' doon!'

She paused with a shudder and looked out at the rain-blurred window and the gathering night. In the silence the hoarse rush of the Otter could be heard, and Jessie's throat swelled with a convulsive movement as if once more she felt the suffocating waters overwhelming her. Norman listened to her story with pity, and, conscious of his sympathy, she went on,—

'Oh, Mr. Reid, believe me, I'm no' sae bad as folk wad hae me. I'm senseless, I'm vain and thochtless, as I've been often telt, but I'm no' sae bad as my father thinks; and so, when I was lifted aff my feet by the spate, I thocht that the water wad end a' my troubles and that surely God wad be kinder to me than my father and the lassies in the workroom whaur I sew. They laugh because I'm a Salvationist, ye ken.'

'Poor child!' said Norman huskily; 'how you have suffered! Could you not have told your mother of your troubles?'

Jessie shook her head.

'No I couldna. I dinna ken why, but I couldna. It's no' but that she's guid and kind—but I can tell *you*,' she said, looking at him through falling tears with

a mute acknowledgment of the unseen bond of sympathy between herself and the young minister.

Strange enigma of our human nature! To think that a daughter can feel so far away from the tenderest mother's heart, and that the eye of a stranger may be privileged to look behind the veil of a repentant soul, which could never reveal itself to its nearest and dearest! God help those among us who seek sympathy on paths strewn with danger.

But Jessie was safe enough in her confidant. She had not erred here, for Norman felt all too keenly for the complex sorrows of humanity, and he knew how to deal with her perplexity.

Gradually he succeeded in subduing her violent grief, and he prayed with her, knowing that the poor tossed soul was safe only in the heavenly Father's care. Again and again she repeated her simple desire.

'I want to be guid. Tell me hoo to be guid! Tell me what I maun do to be different from what I hae been!' she kept crying.

'Do every little duty that lies to your hand. That will help you on the narrow way,' said Norman. 'Help your mother as much as you can. Let those at home see that you are sorry for the past and that you are trying to do your duty. You are very young; let the terrible experience of to-day mould your life for good. I think it will. I trust you and believe that you will make this experience a ladder by which you will climb to higher paths of progress. Pray often, for prayer is the food of the soul.'

'Oh, you are kind to me!' said Jessie; 'and I will do what you tell me, if you will only give me a word of encouragement when you think I am wearyin' by the way.' She clung pathetically to this spontaneous human sympathy; to her it was as yet more real and comprehensible than the distant divine care.

'I will pray for you. I will do what I can,' replied Norman a little wearily. 'Only remember, Jessie, that you have an omnipotent friend in heaven.'

'Yes, I know,' said she with a helpless sob; 'but the lassies will jeer me when they hear what has happened the day. I wish I didna mind them, but it mak's me mad.'

Norman sighed. How could he impress for good this unstable, self-tormenting heart?

'Jessie,' he said somewhat sternly, 'you must bear that too, if God demands it of you. The Christian life is not possible for those who seek their own ease and pleasure. You must learn to suffer for His sake who "when He was reviled opened not His mouth." He bore the cross for you, and if you would be a worthy follower of Him, you must learn to deny yourself—you must not think of your own selfish pleasure. But a higher happiness will be given you. Your path will be cheered with many blessings if with all your heart you truly seek God's guidance. And now good-night. Be comforted, Jessie, and trust Him.'

'Good-night,' sobbed she. 'Dinna think ill o' me. It's difficult for a puir lass to ken what to do. But I'll pray. God made me, and He should ken best

hoo to guide me, Mr. Reid,' said she with a tearful smile.

Poor Jessie! She is not the only girl who has been puzzled by the intricate emotions of her own awakening soul. Nor is she the only one who has found a quick and loving heart a dangerous possession.



CHAPTER XXVI.

KATIE'S RESOLVE.

I'll use that tongue I have—if wit flow from it,
As boldness from my bosom, let it not be doubted
I shall do good. *The Winter's Tale.*

NEXT morning when Norman awoke he had some difficulty in recollecting the events of the past evening. His head was heavy and full of strange noises, and it was with an effort that he dressed and proceeded down-stairs to his study.

From the window he could see that the rain was still falling, slanting in big drops through the white mist ascending from the hot earth. The Otter flowed past in full and rapid spate, its waters spread out far beyond their ordinary channel in a hoarse and leaden flood.

Sheaves of draggled corn, the sunny gleam lost in the turgid whirl of water, were swept past—a woeful presage of loss to the small farmers whose lands lay in the fertile valley of the Otter; the stubble-fields were flooded, and men were paddling about in small boats between the hedgerows, seeking if by any possibility they might be able to seize and save something from the scene of ruin.

But Norman's vision soon grew indistinct, and he

almost staggered into the parlour when Katie called him to breakfast.

'I doot you're no' fit to be up this mornin'. Ye look far frae weel, Norman,' she said anxiously as he sat down heavily and passed his hand over his hot brow.

'I'll be all right after breakfast, Katie.'

'It's no' verra like it. Dae ye want to kill yoursel', workin' for ever amang that fever? Ye had little need to jump into the Otter last nicht.'

'Come, Katie, don't scold. I couldn't help it, you know.'

Katie hung about the parlour and watched him keenly. She began to fear that he had taken the fever. She saw that he made a mere pretence of eating, and that he seemed glad to rise from the table and sink into the lounge by the fire, which she had made bright for his coming. She shook her head as she lifted the tray and closed the door. 'It's time this way o' doin' was put a stop to,' she mumbled to herself as she went along the passage to the kitchen. 'If he's nae better by efternune, I'll send for the doctor—and his mither tae. She'll hae to come noo. And I'll dae mair than that, or my name's no' Katie Lawson! That Morgan maun be brocht to his senses, and I'll see to it, although the verra sky should fa' about my heid. I'll no' hae my puir laddie badgered ony mair.'

'Are ye speakin' to me, mem?' said Jessie at her elbow, for Katie, as usual, had been unconsciously speaking aloud. 'Dae ye mean me, Mrs. Lawson? Eh, I wadna like to bother Mr. Reid!'

Katie put down the tray on the dresser.

'Haud your tongue, lassie; it's no' you—*this* time,' said she grimly. 'Be a douce lass, and tak' your breakfast, and syne rin hame to your mither.'

'Let me bide and help ye wi' the forenune's wark.'

'No; your mither is anxious aboot ye. I've been at your hoose already this mornin' to relieve her mind—and a bonnie story I heard aboot that Morgan pesterin' the life oot o' Mr. Reid. I'm fell angry, I can tell ye; and noo I wadna wonder if the minister tak's the fever. If he dees,' said Katie solemnly, 'his death will be at his—at Morgan's door'—

Jessie stopped her with a wail of anguish.

'Oh, surely, surely he winna tak' the fever and dee! I canna be guid a' by mysel'! I need him to show me hoo.'

Katie was provoked at Jessie's selfishness, but she was sorry for her too.

'If ye want to be truly guid, my lass, seek ye the Lord's ain face. Let naething less content ye,' said she, dishing the smoking porridge into the platters.

'But I canna see the Lord's ain face. My father's aye sayin' the like o' that, but it's naething but a wheen words to me; things are awfu' dark for a puir lass that's no' clever,' persisted Jessie anxiously.

'Draw in your chair as lang as the porridge is hot. Folk maun eat if they wad be ready to do onything at a' in the warld. And, Jessie my woman, jist ye gang strecht in the way o' duty. Maybe the Lord's face will shine upon ye oot o' the mirk. But whether ye see Him or no', jist keep strecht on, for it's better to be

gropin' about for God in the mirk a' your days than to live in the braid daylicht wi' a careless heart that minds Him not. The dark doesna matter.'

Jessie sighed. 'That's a weary kind o' life,' she said. 'I'll never be muckle better at that rate. I doot I'll grow tired o' being guid, for I'm but young yet, and it's a lang road to threescore and ten, if I live to see it.'

'Eh, but young folk are impatient!' cried Katie. 'I can tell ye that it tak's mony a lang day, and near han' a' eternity for a' that *I* ken, to sanctify a soul. The glaur o' the earth mak's awfu' stains even on the white robes o' the redeemed.'

'The redeemed!' said Jessie. 'Hoo ken I that I'm ever to be redeemed? My father doesna seem to think it. I'm but a puir lass on the earth, and my heart is sair wi' sin.'

'Never mind what *your* father thinks, lass. Tell the Father o' us a' everything that troubles ye, and be thankfu' that you're no' past feelin' the pangs o' sin. I'm no' sae guid as I oucht to be mysel', but eh, sae weel as I ken that gin it wasna for the mercifu' pain sae unco ill to thole that God puts intil our hearts to let us ken sin's there, we wadna ken the awfu' nature o' the deidly thing.'

Jessie was silent, and after breakfast she cleared away the dishes and then went home with a softened and a contrite heart, which urged her, to the great embarrassment of her parents, to kneel at their feet with the old eager cry,—

'I want to be guid! Oh, father, oh, mither, I'll try to be guid if ye'll only let me lo'e ye a bit, for I canna stand

cauld looks! I ken I'm no' guid, but the minister has telt me hoo to try.'

Her father, who was still under the softening influences of recent sorrow, and who, indeed, was half-afraid of this passionately-loving daughter whom he had never understood, raised her gently, and patting her curly dark head, said kindly,—

'Hoots, hoots, Jessie, you're no' that ill. Dae a'thing your mither tells ye and be a douce bairn. There, there! dinna greet.'

But her mother with her quicker sympathies discerned the strength of a new resolve amid Jessie's half-hysterical tears and penitence, and bent forward with a rare kiss on her upturned face, whispering softly,—

'Wheesht, my bairn! I'm thankfu' to see ye safe at hame and spared to be a comfort to me.'

The good woman still retained a faint memory of her own girlish days, and she could understand better than her husband could that to one of Jessie's vehement temperament the events of the past night would be fraught with momentous issues, out of which would arise more chastened feelings to guide her in the future.

The mother's middle-aged experience and temperate moods did not hinder her from entering thus far into her daughter's feelings; and as for the father—he, man-like, slunk out of the house to allow the storm of emotion to subside, never dreaming that his own uninviting religion and his own unsympathetic disapproval of his young daughter had caused much of the suffering she had had to endure. Ah, those neutral-tinted souls! How much

they are answerable for! It is their cold creed, their moral maxims, their undemonstrative cold hearts that darken the natural sunshine of many a young life.

Meanwhile, Katie's anxiety on Norman's account grew stronger as the morning wore on, until at last, after persuading him to go to bed, she despatched her little handmaiden for the doctor, who promptly came and pronounced his illness to be fever.

Katie telegraphed for Mrs. Reid, who arrived in the course of the afternoon; and after everything had been arranged for the comfort of Norman and his mother, after a nurse had been installed in the sick-chamber and the household tasks were concluded, Katie with much mumbling and excited nodding of the head put on her plaid and bonnet and stole along the passage towards the front door. She was determined to hasten the train of impending events by 'bearding the lion in his den,' or, in other words, by paying an unexpected visit to Mr. Morgan; and she had just succeeded in cautiously opening the front door when she found herself confronted by Clara, who stood on the steps pale and trembling, looking at her with eyes full of tears.

Katie met the distressed and pleading look with a stiff and cold glance of inquiry. She deeply resented the breaking of the engagement between the lovers, and, woman-like, had cast the whole of the blame upon Clara, who instinctively divined that the grim but true-hearted housekeeper looked upon her, when they chanced to meet, with disapprobation.

'Oh, Mrs. Lawson, is it true that Norman—that Mr.

Reid is dying?' Clara exclaimed, catching Katie's reluctant hands and almost kneeling to her on the door-step in the impulsive abandonment of her grief.

'God forbid, Miss Clara!' ejaculated Katie, softened in spite of herself. 'He has ta'en the fever, it is true, and he has been worried 'maist to death by your uncle. Oh, Miss Clara, I wonder ye could lichtlie him,' she added reproachfully. 'The puir lad had little need o' that to add to his troubles.'

'Katie, Katie, but I'm sorry now! Let me in just for one minute to tell him—to tell him'— But her voice was lost in a tumultuous storm of sobs.

Katie guessed the import of the interrupted confession. With a tear in her keen eyes she drew her in and gently closed the door.

'Wheesht, my bairn!' she said. 'You're a brave lassie to come here, and it winna be for nocht. His mither is here; come into the parlour and rest ye till I tell her you are here.'

Clara as usual had acted upon an overmastering impulse in thus braving her uncle's displeasure and public opinion by coming to the Manse door.

She had heard an exaggerated report of Norman's illness and also of her uncle's behaviour at the session-meeting, and her sympathies had at once flown remorsefully to her lover.

She had tried in vain to forget all that had passed between them. Her heart insisted on retaining an undying memory of all the old sweet time, and on repeating to her Norman's parting words, '*We can never*

be indifferent to each other, and my love for you is changeless.' But was it true? she had often questioned after a chance meeting with him; or had he forgotten the fact of his having laid on her shoulders that difficult task,—the almost unmaidenly initiative of returning to love's sweet allegiance? '*Allow nothing to hinder you from letting me know if you change your mind, for I shall never cease to love you,*' he had said. What if it were she alone who remembered? He had given no sign—he had kept his word to the letter. Through all these long months he had gone on his way apparently forgetful and unheeding of the past. And now he was dying, perhaps, and he would never know how precious he was to her. She could not endure the tormenting thoughts that assailed her, and in her humiliation and sorrow for her past conduct she had determined to brave a rebuff even from Norman himself by seeking an interview with him, if it were possible, at the Manse.

Ere long Mrs. Reid entered the room where Clara awaited her in trepidation and shamefacedness; and the poor girl laid her head upon her old friend's shoulder and wept as she told her what had brought her thither.

'Come with me, my darling,' whispered Norman's mother tenderly. 'All will yet be well. Let us go to him together. Your presence will give him new strength to fight for life.'

So they entered the darkened chamber in which Norman lay, and while his mother gently explained to him the object of Clara's visit, she drew near to his bedside and humbly kissed his hand.



MRS. REID AND CLARA.—*Page* 274.

'Can you forgive me, Norman?' she faltered, with downcast eyes.

'Forgive you, dearest!' said he feebly. 'I have waited long for this happy hour. I knew that you would come back to me. Dear, I love you. You have made me very happy.'

'Ah,' said she tremulously, afraid of agitating him, yet bent on full confession, 'I know now how heartless my conduct to you has been; I shall regret it all my life. Live for me, my dearest, that I may show you how truly I love you.'

'I always knew it, Clara. I was content to wait until you acknowledged it thus nobly.'

'And, Norman, I believe—through sorrowful experience have I won my belief—that love is best for me. Forgive all these past heroics of mine about art. I forego it. It is too high for me. I shall not give you a divided love. But oh, can you forgive me for falling back so meanly—so meanly, dear!—on your love? I do not deserve that you should love me still,' she said with a sob.

'Dearest Clara,' replied Norman, 'love is your true vocation, for you are feminine in heart and brain. That is your greatest charm, my darling. You have not fallen back on love; you have risen to the level of your truest life. Say no more of the past; there are brighter days in store for us!'

But Mrs. Reid, in the midst of her rejoicing over the reunion of the lovers, felt a sudden pang of foreboding as she listened to Norman's last hopeful words. Brighter

days! Ah, but before those brighter days could dawn what dark hours were in store for her and another!

After Clara's departure she sought the seclusion of her own room and paced up and down, lost in painful reverie; and in the compressed mouth and the flush of inward excitement upon her face were visible the outward tokens that she was living over again the joys, the passions, the disappointments of the past.

Meanwhile Katie — a deliverer and an avenger in homely guise—was on her way to Otterbank House, for Clara's presence in the Manse had but given a stronger impulse to her resolve that justice should be done to her well-loved 'lad,' although the heavens should fall.





CHAPTER XXVII.

NEMESIS.

Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.

JOHN FLETCHER.

MR. MORGAN was in his private room when Katie was announced, and at the sight of the unwelcome intruder he looked up from the table where he was writing, with a very forbidding scowl upon his usually bland face.

Now that what was virtually the hour of his advantage had come, he found it barren of those pleasurable feelings of success which he had anticipated. And he could not but acknowledge that this had come about because his motives were impure and his actions unrighteous. It was all very well to salve his conscience and flatter his vanity with the assurance that his persecution of the minister arose out of his zeal for the Church; he knew that he could not truly 'lay that flattering unction to his soul,' for he was well aware, and—what was worse—he knew that his townsmen were also aware, that personal hatred alone had inspired his action from first to last.

He knew that he was fast losing the dearly-prized

respect of these townsmen, and, moreover, he could no longer blink the fact that he was also in danger of losing his own self-respect. He could not but wince under this knowledge, for there was something good in this man, as there is, we are led to believe, in every man who has swerved from the right path; and perhaps this stinging sense of self-disapproval might yet prove a whip to drive him back into the path of honour. But that road was steep and humiliating, and meanwhile the lash of conscience merely irritated him into more stubborn and determined action against the young minister, whom he considered the cause of his spiritual downfall.

At the moment of Katie's entrance he was inditing a letter to the Presbytery anent Norman's alleged heresy. He was determined to get him removed from Otterton, and it was nothing to him that the minister's devotion had brought the dread fever upon him, and that by common report he lay at the gates of death.

Mr. Morgan put aside his pen, and, pushing back his chair, he motioned Katie to be seated, while the gloom deepened on his face as he recognised her. Seeing that she ignored his invitation to sit down, he addressed her sharply.

'Be so good as to state your business at once, Mrs. Lawson.'

The curt tone roused Katie's ire. 'I suppose,' said she, 'that ye'll be thinkin' the ba' is at your feet noo that Mr. Reid is lyin' at death's door, mair through worry brought aboot by you than through the fever?'

'What on earth do you mean to insinuate, woman?'

he exclaimed haughtily. 'Have you taken it upon you to come here for the purpose of taxing *me* with being the cause of your master's illness? You are a most unreasonable person, and you will oblige me by leaving the room. Mr. Reid has brought the fever upon himself—and it has come at a most convenient time for him.'

Katie could not stand the sneering innuendo.

'Oh, man,' she cried hotly, 'you're scarcely human, I think, to speak like that o' a puir young man that has followed in his Maister's steps even to the cheerfu' layin' doon o' his life for strangers, if such is the Lord's will. Weel can I believe the truth o' what my auld auntie used to say. "Katie lass," quo' she, "mind ye this—the warst deils that walk the earth hinna ony vulgar smell o' brimstane to let ye ken whaur they come frae. Na, they're finished gentlemen, ilka ane. It's a puir bit 'prentice deil that brings his trade-mark wi' him."'

Mr. Morgan glared at Katie in speechless anger and advanced to open the door to show her out.

'I've something to say to ye, sir, before I shake aff the dust o' this hoose frae my feet.'

'Do you think that I will listen to such a ridiculous old virago as you?' said Mr. Morgan angrily.

'Virago or no,' said Katie, nothing daunted but calmly seating herself in a chair, 'ye hae got to listen to me. If ye dinna ken what's richt, ye shall be telt it ance for a'; an' let me tell ye, sir, there's ane in this unhallowed hoose that does what's richt by puir Mr. Reid, an' that's Miss Clara. I left her beggin' an' pleadin' wi' his mither to let her ance mair see the lad she had lichtlied.'

'What!' thundered Mr. Morgan, striding threateningly towards Katie in his astonishment. 'Do you mean to tell me that my niece has gone alone to the Manse?'

'Umphm,' said Katie calmly as she untied her bonnet-strings and slowly unfastened her shawl.

Mr. Morgan fairly stamped his foot with rage. 'I will have nothing further to do with her. She shall not return to this house, the ungrateful, immodest, bold, deceitful girl! But what other could I expect from the daughter of such a father? She must have been born bad. I wish to goodness that I had let her remain in her proper element. It is impossible to bring good out of evil. Bad father—bad child. That is one of the consequences of giving way to youthful folly. She was bound to inherit her father's depravity;—children suffer for their parents' misdeeds.'

Katie sat quietly waiting until the blind torrent of rage had spent its first force. There was a provoking smile upon her lips. She had intended to let this masterful gentleman take his swing a little, for she was conscious of having in her possession a power sufficient to crush him when she chose to put it forth. But at his last words she bent towards him with uplifted hand and said almost solemnly, 'Ye never said a truer word. The bairns suffer for their fathers' sin. Oot o' your ain mouth are ye condemned. Noo, wad ye be surprised to hear that ye hae gotten yoursel' into a bonnie hubble on accoont o' your ain youthfu' folly? Man, man, fling aff your self-righteousness. Wha are ye to judge ither folk?

Look back twenty-five years syne. Do ye mind bonnie Marion Dale?'

Mr. Morgan stood as if petrified, and his angry eyes suddenly swerved away from Katie's direct gaze. His face was perceptibly paler as he said hoarsely,—

'Woman, who are you? What do you know of me?'

Katie—homely Katie—had assumed in his eyes the character of Nemesis pointing threateningly aloft to a sword of retribution. A fierce struggle was going on in the breast of Mr. Morgan;—anger and dread fought together for the mastery, for he knew, as he instinctively obeyed Katie and looked back through the years, that his sin had found him out, and that in this the hour of his outward power and prosperity he was unexpectedly confronted by a retributive image from the past.

But he must find out by what strange chance this unknown woman held his destiny in her hands.

'Who are you? What do you know of me?' he repeated, sinking weakly into a chair.

Katie, much enjoying his discomfiture, deliberately rose to satisfy herself that the door was shut; then she approached Mr. Morgan, and, standing before him with one hand stretched out, she said in a low but distinct voice,—

'I ken mair than enough aboot ye to ruin your character, godly rulin' elder though ye pretend to be. —I wadna wonder noo gin ye hae pretendit sae lang to be ane o' the elect that ye believe it yoursel' noo. But God doesna forget, though ye may; an' ye canna mock Him as ye did the woman that lo'ed ye. An' noo I tell

ye plainly that I hae ta'en it upon me to become the Lord's instrument against ye—except ye repent. I wadna be mair revengefu' than the Lord Himsel'. I will use my knowledge o' your past as a threat to haud ower ye, unless ye stop pesterin' yon puir lad at the Manse, an' unless ye mak' an ample apology to him before the session. As for wha I am—I am and I was Marion Dale's servant; and when ye stole through the lanes o' Netherholm in the simmer gloamin's to court her, I saw ye mony a time unkent to ye baith. I ken hoo ye wiled the orphan lassie frae her hame and hoo ye married her secretly, though under your ain name, an' hoo ye basely deserted her less than six weeks after ye were wed; an' nane but me kens hoo the puir lassie cam' hame again to her faithfu' Katie, broken-hearted an' humbled to the dust. An' mair I ken'—

Mr. Morgan was leaning forward in his chair with his head bowed upon his hands.

'Tell me, is she still alive? You say you are still her servant?' he said in a low voice.

'Yes.'

'Where is she? Tell me if you know where she is?' he cried, lifting his head and speaking eagerly.

'No' sae fast, sir; Marion Dale is a prouder woman than ance she was, an' is no' likely to be again at *your* beck an' ca'. Remember ye hae spoiled her life, and that's no' a thing that can be mended. What's dune is by wi' for evermair.'

But I would do something to redeem the past,' said he brokenly. 'I loved her and knew it all too late, for

when I sought for her I could find no traces of her. I thought she was dead.'

'She left the place that kent o' her shame, and I gaed wi' her to a strange toon. An' she took her mother's name, since she had nae richt tae her ain, an' she scorned to claim the dishonoured name ye had gien her. She didna want her young son to ken ocht o' his father's'—

'Her son!' interrupted Mr. Morgan with a flush and a start of surprise.

'Ay—an' yours. Oh, man, the ways o' the Lord are past oor puir comprehension! Are ye no' struck dumb wi' awe to think that He used ye—*yoursel'*—as the instrument to work oot your ain retribution? It was you that brocht your ain son here, and when I recognised ye stannin' on the Manse door-step the first day I was in Otterton, I owned that the Lord's hand had been workin' wondrous things. Man, man, ye hae lifted yoursel' against your ain flesh and bluid, for Norman Reid is your son, though he kens it not.'

'Good God!' exclaimed Mr. Morgan, wiping the clammy sweat from his brow as he recollected the wave of subtly-elusive resemblance to some one he knew which had on various occasions passed over his mind in the presence of the young minister.

He did not dream of doubting Katie's extraordinary statement, for the resemblance which had so baffled him now suddenly revealed itself in a flash of certainty as an unmistakable likeness to himself.

'But why was there not some effort made to let me know this? I searched the newspapers for an answer to

my advertisements. I did everything in my power to recover her,' he said in a low voice, strangely unlike his usual strident tones.

'Was it likely that she wad tell ye,—you, a wife-deserter!' retorted Katie scathingly. 'But when I recognised ye that first day, I wrote to her, and sair distressed she was to think that Norman had come within his father's ken. She bound me doon to secrecy, but I kept my e'e upon you, and I wad never hae let ye ken he was your son if it hadna been that I was driven past patience by the way ye gaed on. I couldna bear to see the wicked prosperin' "like a green bay tree." But I am here on my ain accoont. She doesna ken I hae ta'en things into my ain hand.'

'Where is she?'

'Whaur should she be but at the bed-side o' her son?'

Mr. Morgan was profoundly moved at the idea of the near proximity of his wife.

'I sent for her,' continued Katie; 'an' she is wi' him noo, an' nae doot she is cursin' you in her hert.'

'Woman, hold your tongue!' groaned Mr. Morgan, completely shattered by being thus suddenly confronted with the existence of his wife and son—and that son the man whom he had so persistently persecuted. He was anxious to be alone. He rose nervously from his chair.

'I must think of what requires to be done,' he said lamely, unwilling to take Katie into his confidence; but, having already tasted the keen delights of power, she was not prepared to let him off thus easily. She rose and tied her bonnet-strings with a determined hand.

'There's only twa ways in this matter,' she said—'a richt way an' a wrang; an' there's nae thinkin' needed by ony honest man. Thocht is a crafty device o' the deil, an' I'll hae nae mair o' *his* wark here; an' mark ye—if ye tak' the wrang way I'll be doon upon ye, though ye should be backed by every lawyer i' the land. I'm here to see that ye bear your share o' the misery ye hae caused. It doesna often happen that an ill-doer gets the wages he has wrocht for; it's no' the body that maist deserves to suffer that gets his due. It's the innocent that suffers for the guilty, frae Christ Himsel' down to a drunkard's weans; but in your case I'll mak' sure ye get your wages. But I'll say naething to Mrs. Reid nor to onybody else for three days. Three days o' grace ye shall hae, but if by that time ye dinna come forrit and mak' crooked things strecht, I'll brand ye for a wife-deserter through a' the toon,' said Katie triumphantly as she left the room, while her relentless words seemed to scorch the heart of the man thus left face to face with the retribution which does not often so openly follow the sins of youth.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

BITING THE DUST.

Remembrance frets my heart in solitude,
As the lone mouse when all the house is still
Gnaws at the wainscot.
'Tis a haunting face!

ALEX. SMITH.

MR. MORGAN paced noiselessly to and fro over the soft carpet with his hands clasped and his head sunk on his breast. It was an attitude expressive of intense humiliation, for Katie Lawson had by her almost brutal plain-speaking forced him to recognise the real nature of his long-buried but still living sin.

'A wife-deserter!' Yes, that was how the world would look upon him — that world whose good opinion was the very breath of his nostrils, that world in which he was known as a zealous Christian and an honourable gentleman!

But what was that in comparison with the wrong he had done to *her* and to God?

He lifted his arms high above his head and clenched his hands in impotent despair as he groaned aloud under

the scourge of remorse. The figure of his wronged wife seemed to flit before him, and his half-forgotten past, which had so long submitted to lie quietly beneath religious conventionalities, arose like a spirit, or rather like a conscience, to oppress him.

In panoramic display the scenes and incidents of the time when first he met Marion Dale passed before his mental eye, and at every point he found that he was condemning himself with the stern and impersonal judgment of an onlooker.

He saw himself—his youthful self—hastening through the soft summer gloamings of long ago from the northern city where he was temporarily staying to the village of Netherholm, five miles distant, where dwelt the girl he loved. She was only a village schoolmistress, orphaned, friendless, and poor, while he was the only son of a wealthy employer of labour; and, as if further to emphasise the social difference between their positions, he, imbued with a vain and boastful spirit, had led the simple girl to believe that his father was a landed proprietor with an estate, which he vaguely located in the west of Scotland.

But love had cast its glamour over him, and for a time he was content to 'count the world well lost' for the sake of sweet Marion Dale. To be with her was to be in paradise, and the pulses of the now elderly man thrilled again as memory pictured his early love coyly advancing to meet him between the flower-haunted hedges, while the western sunbeams sent mystical golden gleams through the leafy greenness of the wayside trees.

Once more he saw her liquid dark eyes, shining and tender, reflecting his loving gaze as pools reflect the radiance of the noonday sun; once more he saw the smile that broke the demure curves of her delicate mouth, and the rosy blush that so sweetly answered his ardent gaze; and once more he heard the silvery tones of her voice. Ah, those hours of young love, when each was all-sufficient for the other as they wandered with 'linked arms and hearts aglow' in all the rapturous privacy of half-acknowledged love!

But all the while he came to meet this pure and simple maiden with a lie upon his lips! While she trusted him 'all in all,' he was already looking beyond the summer dalliance to a life wherein she had no place.

For if there was one thing on earth which he dreaded, it was the tyranny of his mother, and to escape that he weakly played the villain, for he had no desire that his stern and imperious mother should find out how he was spending his leisure. She, he knew, had far other, far higher views for the establishment of her only son; and he, too, was ambitious and meant to accede to her demands that he would become his father's partner and marry the wealthy bride whom she destined for him. But love had caught him in its toils, and what he had intended to be merely a pleasant summer's pastime became a matter of momentous and absorbing interest to him. He loved Marion Dale with all the intensity of which his selfish heart was capable; but he did not love her well enough to make him true to himself and to her. In the end he persuaded her to marry him privately,

silencing her natural scruples by a story which sounded plausible enough in her innocent ears; and he trusted, as so many thoughtless and inexperienced young men had done before him, to chance to remove the difficulties of the future.

He fancied in his youthful folly and ignorance that he would have no difficulty in making circumstances bend to his will; but he had yet to learn that sin is limitless in its reach, and that no man can guess the ultimate results of any deviation from the path of truth —that one false act is like a stone flung into a deep and silent pool, which causes an ever-widening series of circles to arise until the eye can no longer discern the far-spreading circumference of silent motion.

Still Mr. Morgan paced to and fro, while memory with threatening finger pointed to the past as it further unrolled itself.

Once more he saw the figure of sweet Marion Dale, his five-weeks' wife now, all unconscious of the dark and sinful designs her husband hid from her beneath his Judas kisses. He lived over again the night upon which he stole from her side, leaving a letter containing the pitiful falsehood by which he strove as much to silence his own clamorous conscience as to comfort her — in which he told her that he must go away for a time owing to the receipt of a letter from home summoning him to the death-bed of his father, and advised her to return to the little school-house at Netherholm until he should smooth the way for her introduction to his people as his wife. But in the letter he carefully abstained

from any mention of his address or of the fact that the letter was a stormy one from his mother, who had received a hint of how he spent his evenings. She wrote, commanding him to return home at once on pain of forfeiting not only his place in the foundry but the bride of her choice, to whom another suitor had begun to pay his addresses.

Mr. Morgan groaned aloud as memory relentlessly pictured to him the dastard youth fleeing by night, and he looked with a curious horror upon his past self. He beheld himself metamorphosed into a secret scoundrel, making love to another pure-minded girl while the claims of his deserted wife were thrust deliberately aside. And yet he had prospered—as the world reckons prosperity! True, he had been saved, but by no action or penitence of his own, from burdening his conscience with another heinous crime, for the girl that his mother desired him to marry was betrothed and soon thereafter married to another. But, although the way was thus far smoothed for his return to the path of honour, he took no steps to bring his wife home. He drifted along with the current of circumstances, and the years went past with an ever-accumulating load of future remorse upon their eternal records, and memory bided her time to reveal them.

At length his father died, and soon thereafter his mother also, and he returned from abroad to take his place as head of the firm and master of Otterbank House. Gradually he became known as a devout and liberal Christian, but still his secret slumbered in his heart.

But after a while, when he felt securely that he was his own master and the terror which his mother had exerted over him finally died away, he began to make cautious inquiries after his wife; and his heart yearned over her with more than the old love as the time passed by without bringing any intelligence of her. At length, unable to discover even whether she was still living, he relinquished the search. He concluded that she was dead, and, save for an occasional twinge of conscience as he gazed nightly upon her portrait, he pursued his way in prosperous ease.

Thus it came about that, after more than a quarter of a century of prosperous and prosaic existence, he had come to regard his hasty marriage with Marion Dale as little more than an episode in his otherwise unromantic and respectable life;—as a young man's folly, in short, and a sowing of the proverbial wild oats which fortunately had left no harvest of undesirable consequences to be reaped. For this he was unfeignedly thankful to Providence, and the outcome of this feeling was a zealous attention to the religious formalities of the Church, and consequently an unconscious hardening of the heart against 'pure religion and undefiled.'

Still, as he paced to and fro in solitude, Mr. Morgan followed the finger of memory in the past. He saw once more the coming of his son to Otterton, and he acknowledged with a thrill of awe how extraordinary were the links of the chain with which fate had fettered him. He, as Katie had pointed out, had brought his son to Otterton! He recalled the high favour in which he

had at first held the young minister, and the evident backwardness of the latter to reciprocate his feeling of good-will. What strange instinct was it that had warned the honourable son against the dishonourable father, and how would it be between them if the real relationship were divulged? He began almost to dread this son whom he had persecuted, as he called to mind the strange effect of the fleeting likeness which had so often constrained and dismayed him, for he knew that he could expect no mercy at his hands, and he acknowledged that his own relentless persecution had winged the arrow which had laid him thus low in the dust.

In these few hours while he traversed the silent room the full and ruddy visage of the ruling elder became haggard and wan. But gradually he grew more like his prompt and resolute self, as the unflinching hand of memory paused over the humbling retrospect of his life. He became calm—calm with the desperate resolve to have done with the falsity, the hatred, the sin of the past. He saw the necessity for immediate action, but he was driven thereto by no fear of Katie Lawson's threats. He was determined to reinstate himself as far as might be in the eyes of God, of himself, and of his fellows. He would do all that he could, even to the public announcement of his sin, to atone for the past; and, as he thus resolved, there slowly grew upon him a sense of satisfaction—nay, of timid affection—in the thought that he possessed a wife and son. Even although they should unite with the world—as in his new humility he owned they justly might unite—in repudiating his

tardy and enforced retrieval, he was resolutely determined not to shrink from the herculean task which resistless fate had imposed upon him.

It seemed as if a breath of healthier air were wafted over his spirit from some higher sphere;—he raised his head, and, wiping the beads of sweat from his haggard face, lifted up his voice in penitent prayer to the God whom he felt he had most of all wronged, and thereafter he went forth to meet his wife.





CHAPTER XXIX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

Oh what was love made for if 'tis not the same
Through joy and through torments, through glory and shame?
T. Moore.

LATER that evening, when Katie was moving diligently among her household duties by the cheerful firelight of her cosy kitchen, rehearsing the while many imaginary conversations between herself and the ruling elder, each of which terminated in an even more triumphant victory for her than her real encounter with him a few hours before had done, she was startled by the spasmodic movements of the door bell, which on account of Norman's illness had been muffled with straw.

'Preserve me!' she exclaimed, fumbling hastily for a taper among the shadows which danced along the high mantel-shelf and lighting it at the fire. 'Wha can be comin' to the Manse at this time o' nicht? It canna be the doctor again, surely?' she said with quickened steps. 'It's only eicht o'clock efter a'!' she added as

she caught sight of the tall clock in the hall. 'Hoo fast the days are drawin' in!'

When she opened the door the light in her hand flared and bent before the rising wind, and, while she put up her hand to shield it, some one stepped quickly into the hall and shut the door.

'Is it *you*, Mr. Morgan?' exclaimed Katie, surprised and curious.

'I want to see my—your mistress,' he said in a strangely subdued tone of voice. 'Give her my card.'

The hand which proffered it trembled violently, and all questions were for once arrested on Katie's lips as she peered into his face; for, from the grey, drawn visage of the man before her, it was impossible to doubt that he was in the grip of a terrible remorse.

She silently held out her hand for the card and beckoned him to follow her into the room, which Clara had not long before quitted on her departure from the house. Katie lit the gas, still without speaking, and left the room softly, for she felt that there was a tragic significance in the silence of the man whom she had thus strangely admitted into his wife's home. As she slowly ascended the stairs on her way to her mistress, she began for the first time to wonder whether she had not perhaps made a mistake. She felt vaguely afraid of the silent force of Mr. Morgan's mood, and she shook her head ominously as the thought occurred to her that her mistress would have a right to be angry with her for intermeddling with such a delicate matter.

Besides, Mrs. Reid, at all times easily agitated and

now weary with her long journey and sad with the knowledge of her son's serious illness, was scarcely in a fit state to receive the husband who had cruelly deserted her so long ago, and who had now so unexpectedly come to see her.

Katie had confidently counted on having abundance of time in which to prepare her mistress for the probability of such a visit.

'What for couldna the man tak' the three days o' grace I allooed him? I ken by his face that his back is at the wa' noo,' she muttered peevishly, dismayed to find that fate had other instruments besides her wherewith to work its sovereign will, and, truth to tell, alarmed at the effect on Mr. Morgan of the victory in which she had just been glorying—an effect not only beyond her anticipation, but—what was more awe-inspiring—beyond her power to control.

'I'll just need to tell the mistress a' aboot it this minute,' she grumbled. 'I'm sure ye never ken what men-folk are up to. They maun aye keep a body in some pickle or ither!'

She tapped softly at the door of Norman's bedroom, and on Mrs. Reid's appearance she beckoned her towards a small anteroom and lost no time in telling her story.

'An' he's doon the stair the noo, waitin' to speak to ye, an' this is his card,' she concluded breathlessly.

Mrs. Reid's face blanched and the slip of paper which Katie had thrust into her hand fell to the floor. She

opened her mouth to speak, but no words issued forth from between the dry lips. Again she essayed to speak.

'Tell him that I cannot see him,' she said in a gasping whisper.

'Verra weel,' said Katie as she turned to go, relieved to find no word of reproach directed against herself. 'It's no' a time o' nicht, at ony rate, to come and bother ye.'

'Wait, Katie, wait!' cried Mrs. Reid desperately before the old servant had taken two steps across the floor. 'Tell him I cannot see him—now,' she said with a sob which heralded a burst of bitter weeping.

Katie put her faithful arms round her and strove to comfort her.

'Oh, Katie, why did you tell him? What am I to do—what am I to do?' cried her mistress.

'Oh, my dear,' said the old woman, wiping away the tears from her own eyes, 'I meant it for guid. I couldna wait ony langer efter seein' the puir lad ben there brocht so low through that man doon the stair. Life is no' lang enough for shilly-shallyin' wi' richt an' wrang, an' I bode to bring him to accoont. Dinna be vexed. I did it for the best.'

After a while Mrs. Reid recovered her composure.

'Go down,' she said again as she rose to resume her watch in Norman's chamber; 'tell him that I cannot see him.' She looked pleadingly at Katie as if to urge her to read the relenting which was hidden beneath the cold words, but Katie's eyes were too dim with tears

to see the look of yearning and long-repressed love in the face of her mistress.

'I'll tell him. Trust to me,' she whispered as she turned to descend the stair.

She delivered her message as gently as possible, but nevertheless to him who heard, yet knew not of the hope of a future meeting with which Mrs. Reid's tears and hesitation had imbued it, Katie's words sounded like the knell of doom. She shrank aghast before the sudden look of speechless misery that came into Mr. Morgan's face.

No stormy upbraiding from the lips of his wronged wife could have had half the power to humiliate that this courteous denial of his request to see her had. He turned to leave the room, but everything seemed to swim around him, and a noise as of many waters tingled into his ears. Mechanically he stretched out his hand to grasp the chair from which he had risen, but a strange blackness of darkness closed round him, and in another moment, without a word, he fell prone at Katie's feet.

She lost her presence of mind, she shrieked aloud for her mistress, she frantically strove to lift the grey head from the carpet as Mrs. Reid with a dreadful terror on her face rushed into the room.

'Stephen, Stephen! oh, my love!' cried the unhappy wife, as she flung herself down beside the dark, still figure.

Katie stood by, too much awed to move or speak.

'Is he dead? Tell me, is he dead?' said Mrs. Reid

at last, rousing herself from her momentary stupor of grief. 'Oh, I am a hard and wicked woman!'

Katie knelt down and placed her hand upon the heart of the motionless man. To her unbounded relief, she felt a faint pulsation of life. 'He is alive,' she said, looking pitifully into Mrs. Reid's face. 'Dinna vex yoursel' sae sair, or I'll be fit to droon mysel'.' She chafed his hands and wiped the damp dews from his brow, while Mrs. Reid knelt trembling by her side, realising in an agony of sympathy the enormous strain and stress of the remorse which had brought the strong man thus low.

They managed between them to lift him on to the sofa, and after Katie had bathed his forehead and touched his lips with a cordial he began slowly to revive. But his eyes opened only to close again with a quick shudder, and his face grew ashen once more.

Katie slipped quietly from the room.

'Stephen, won't you open your eyes? Won't you look at me?' murmured his wife, placing her hand gently upon his. He moved his head with a groan, and slow and difficult tears welled from beneath his closed eyelids.

It was sad to see the strong man's shame; and his wife, sick at heart, bent low.

'Stephen,' she said again, 'look up. Speak to me. I freely forgive you. I was wrong too. In so suddenly and completely disappearing from Netherholm I barred the way against your return to me; and although I saw your advertisement, I was too proud and hard to answer it.'

Still he did not speak, but his hand dumbly sought her answering clasp.

'And to-night, Stephen, when I was told that you were here, I felt hard and unforgiving, but that is all over.' She paused, unable for a moment to proceed; then with a sudden cry of pain she exclaimed, 'Help me, oh my husband, to forget the past!'

There was a faint flickering of his eyelids, and at last in a low voice he said, 'I cannot forget it—it is burned into my heart. How can you forgive me, Marion?—I sinned against you so deliberately!'

'But I do forgive you—because I love you,' she said half-shyly; but her husband flung his hands before his face with a bitter cry, and for a little space there was silence in the room.

By-and-bye Katie ventured to tap at the door; and on receiving permission she entered, bearing in her hospitable hands a well-filled supper-tray.

Katie had a sound conviction that one of the best methods of ministering 'to a mind diseased' was to approach it circuitously in some such appetising fashion as this. So she arranged the impromptu repast with quite a cheerful clatter of knives and plates. Then she stirred the fire into a crackling blaze, and, with a tearful look of affection towards her mistress, once more withdrew, leaving the husband and wife to break bread together in peace and love.

Outside, the wind howled gustily round the house and sent rustling crowds of fallen leaves along the gravelled path, while now and again a dash of rain against the

windows proclaimed that the night was tempestuous; but these conditions merely heightened the feelings of comfort and intense thankfulness within.

After supper he would fain have confessed to her all his penitence and desires to atone, but, with the old love shining in her still beautiful eyes to second her request, she pleaded that he would 'let the dead past bury its dead,' and that he would not seek to pierce behind the cloud which had so long obscured the zenith of their lives, but rather that he would help her to gather the raindrops of blessing and mercy which had fallen from that cloud upon their heads.

Then she took his arm and together they entered the room where their son lay. Katie flitted from the chamber like a ghost as the husband and wife approached the bed.

'If he dies, his death will lie at my door,' said he in a hoarse tone of anguish.

'Not so,' replied she; 'for the issues of life and of death are in a higher hand. Let us pray that he may be spared to us.'

'Oh, Marion! looking upon him lying there, can you really forgive me?' and as she opened her lips to answer him, from the dim borderland of delirium in which Norman was tossing came the words, 'Until seventy times seven.'

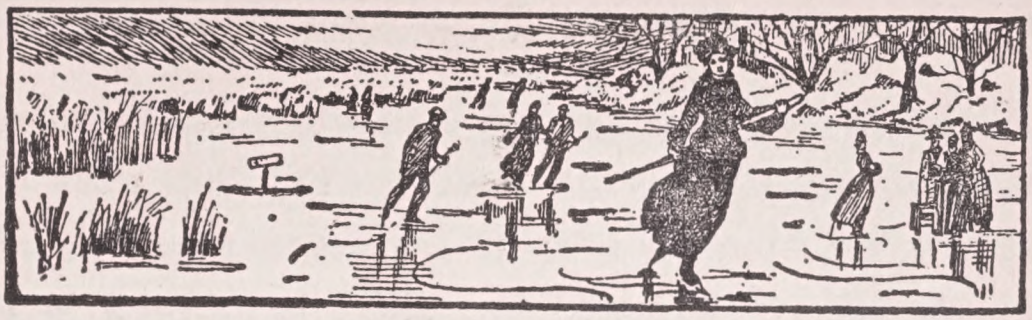
A light of joy flashed over his mother's face.

'Our son has answered you, Stephen. Rest in peace,' she said.

Stephen Morgan never felt so completely humbled as

he did on that night when the loving forgiveness of the wife whom he had so cruelly wronged fell upon his broken spirit like a beam from the Divine mercy; and rest assured that the penitence, the agony, the remorse of that eventful time bore the 'peaceable fruits of righteousness' after many days.





CHAPTER XXX.

A GOOD NEW YEAR!

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is dying—let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

TENNYSON.

THE months passed on into winter before the epidemic had quite left the Waterside district, and it was the end of November before Norman, whose life had at one time been despaired of, was able to resume his ministerial work.

He had accepted the strange, ironical fact of his relentless persecutor proving to be his own father with the curious absence of surprise characteristic of those who have been face to face with death, and to whom the assured possession of life makes everything else seem commonplace and subordinate in comparison.

During the quiet time of Norman's convalescence, Mr. Morgan had found many opportunities of acquainting himself anew with the character of his son, who on his part was not slow, we may be sure, to respond to the overtures of peace and affection which his new-found father humbly

and timidly made to him. As for his mother, she seemed to have renewed her youth now that the crushing secret was removed from her life; and Clara, too, was happier than she had ever dreamed she could have been in the prospect of a future in which art, if it had any place at all, must needs prove secondary to all-conquering love.

Mr. Morgan in the excess of his humility was anxious to make some semi-public statement regarding his past treatment of his wife and son; but they, rightly contending that outsiders had nothing whatever to do with such a delicate private matter, induced him to abandon his intention.

But, truth to tell, the essential facts of the strange story had by some means or other got wind among the curious, and Mr. Morgan had to submit to the humiliation of finding himself a 'nine days' wonder' in the town where he had once carried himself so loftily.

But very soon signs of a wider and more genuine popularity than he had ever before enjoyed were not wanting to convince him that men on the whole appreciate every endeavour to make honourable amends for wrong-doing. His workmen, won by his kindly attitude towards them, began to speak kindly of him in return, and to admit that there was 'some good in the master after all;' and doubtless they had many a talk at their own firesides about the softened demeanour of the once arrogant and supercilious tyrant, about the subdued look of suffering and patience in his face, and about the many tokens he gave of his new interest in their well-being.

These 'fair humanities' did more to place the relations between master and men on a proper footing than could have been done by months of the old bitter struggle, even had it ended in a victory for the workmen.

One unmistakable proof of the reality of the change that had come over the spirit of the man was that, unasked, he had considerably raised their wages; but perhaps the most generally convincing evidence of this was the fact of his having after all 'footed' Norman's subscription list with a munificent donation, which had enabled the committee appointed for the purpose to secure premises for the workmen's institute in the Water-side district of much larger dimensions and to equip it in a much more elaborate style than had been originally contemplated.

The work of altering and arranging these to serve the end in view had been vigorously pushed forward during the period of Norman's illness and recovery, and now—on this the last day of the eventful old year—the Institute stood completed, luxuriously fitted up, and gaily bedecked with bright-berried holly, awaiting the opening ceremony, which was to take place that evening.

Norman and Clara had been quietly married on Christmas Eve, and this last day of the year which was to witness their home-coming will long be memorable in the annals of the little world of human beings who had been spectators of the drama of the past months.

Although a chill yellow snow-mist hung over the frost-encrusted Otter, and the large white flakes of a 'feeding storm' were beginning to fall heavily to the ground,

nothing could damp the spirits of the little crowd of people waiting at the Manse gates for the arrival of the carriage containing the bride and bridegroom.

Ere long their patience was rewarded. The carriage came rapidly into view, and cheers rang forth again and again as Norman, somewhat pale yet from his recent illness but looking a happy and a gallant bridegroom, drew down the window and bowed in acknowledgment of the tribute so enthusiastically offered.

'Welcome hame! A guid New Year! Welcome hame to you and your young wife, sir!' cried a dozen eager voices as Norman stepped down among them, returning their greetings with many cordial handshakings and words of good-will. Then he turned with a smile and assisted Clara to alight.

What a lovely blushing bride she made in her travelling cloak and cap of crimson and ermine! She passed on her husband's arm along an admiring lane of familiar faces through the garden, which the snow had transformed into an enchanted land. From every bough of the evergreens and from every twig of the tall bare trees hung a marvellous shining legion of twinkling, dripping icicles; the lawn lay a broad expanse of purest white, unbroken save by the dainty footprints of the birds; and the snow-flakes fell fast upon her head, but not faster than the good-wishes and blessings that greeted her homecoming.

Her dark eyes were shining with emotion and her lips trembled as she noted the many evidences of the love which her husband had gained for himself among his

people. She smiled half-tearfully into his face, and he pressed her arm tenderly to his side as he led her over the threshold of home, for he divined the nature of the emotion which had thus brought the dew into her happy eyes.

Mr. and Mrs. Morgan hastened forward to greet them; and Katie, resplendent in a new black satin gown which she proudly declared could 'stand its lane,' fairly kissed Norman before them all, and the tears were in her faithful old eyes as she bade them both welcome home.

'Home!' said Clara musingly when they two found themselves alone for a little after the bustle of their reception had subsided; 'it is a beautiful word—a restful word. But what a commonplace sentiment I am uttering!' she added with a merry laugh.

'Not so, my darling,' replied Norman, his arm stealing round her waist as she stood encircled by the ruddy light upon the glowing hearth. 'Not so, since your fresh experience has endowed it with new significance for us both.'

'Ah, Norman, do you remember how nearly I lost this blessed home in my search for an imaginary palace of art?'

'But now you have come into your true kingdom, my precious queen of home,' said he. 'Let us be thankful that a guiding Hand has brought us safe into "our desired haven." Love and Faith shall be the twin-stars to light our home; and God grant that the reflection of that home-light may shine upon and cheer many a weary one struggling in the thick of life's dark battle. Dearest wife, our happiness is brighter for the sorrow that went

before; let us go through life working together to fulfil God's purposes on earth.' . . . . . .

In the evening there was a grand muster of the working men, their wives, children, and sweethearts, to celebrate the opening of the new Institute. A different social gathering this from that in which Norman took part on his first appearance in Otterton! For even in those few intervening months death and change, as we know, had levied their tax, and the fever had swept away many whose place in church and social meeting would know them no more. But he looked upon each remaining well-known face with a full and thankful heart. Shall we take a last look at some of our old acquaintances?

Robert Borland was there, sitting douce and grave between his wife and Adam Auld—the latter carefully wrapped up in an ample tartan plaid, for he was suffering much from rheumatism during this snowy weather. Adam was a proud man that night, for he was about to be elevated to the responsible position of timekeeper at Otterbank Foundry. There was a pretty house and garden attached to the post, and, as Adam said to Katie, who sat on his other side, 'it was a fine canny job for an auld man, and he didna doot but that the garden could be made to pay.'

And Mysie was there—sweet blind Mysie, to whom I am loath to bid farewell. Her pure pale face with its look of gentle power shone like a lily beneath her modest bonnet; and by her side sat her cousin, Jessie Borland, eager and impulsive as ever, leaning forward with smiling lips apart to observe all that was going on.

She made a pretty bit of vivid colouring beside pale Mysie, for her cheeks were glowing with excitement and her curly dark hair was crowned with a coquettish little hat encircled by a splendid scarlet feather, and her eyes twinkled roguishly with the seldom absent gleam of humour which was certainly needed to redeem her eager face from being simply tragic in its intensity of expression.

For once Jessie was happy, and so was John Logan who sat by her side, for Jessie wore his New Year's gift —a bright gold locket—suspended from her neck, and she had promised, with the full and willing consent of her father, that 'some day' she would be his wife.

Be sure that she will have much to discourage her as she struggles up the Hill Difficulty on her way to the Celestial City; but though at times the old stinging sense of defeat and lack of goodness will come to goad her into passionate penitence—why, that is the penalty she is bound to pay for her growing nobility of character. It is not given to many to walk ever in the light of God's face as Mysie was privileged to do.

And what shall I say of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan except that they were exceeding glad in the pain-brought knowledge that lay deep in both hearts—the knowledge that love was with them for evermore. Love had conquered sorrow and regret, it had made remorse endurable, it had given them joy for grief, and for despair a glad new hope wherewith to begin another year.

It is true that there was in each heart a haunted chamber, and that the blessed veil of loving silence was

all that concealed the sorrowful, sinful past, but the lesson that 'silence is golden' is one which we have all to learn as life ripens; and after all, speech is but a poor makeshift creation, suitable only for this incomplete world of ours, and a thing to be used sparingly at best, seeing that the lips are dangerously near that sinful, impetuous, loving, contrary, mischief-making thing—the human heart.

And since these are my sentiments, I will not inflict upon the indulgent reader an account of the many speeches which were delivered at the opening of the Institute. Suffice it to say that Mr. Morgan, as by far the most liberal subscriber to the scheme that had culminated so triumphantly in the meeting of that night, had been asked and had reluctantly consented to declare the Institute open; and this he did in a speech notable chiefly for its brevity and modesty, its kindly tone and genuine feeling—qualities which had hitherto always been 'conspicuous by their absence' from the many orations that Mr. Morgan had from first to last delivered on public occasions.

The evening passed quickly and pleasantly away with its varied programme of speech and song and sentiment; and by the time that was concluded, the close of the old year was so near that it was laughingly proposed and settled by acclamation that the company should remain to welcome the New Year in.

The hands of the clock soon reached the midnight hour. A solemn hush fell upon the assembled people as the silvery chime rang out twelve; then with one

accord all were on their feet and with much cheering and hand-shaking were wishing each other 'a Happy New Year.'

Nobody ever knew who started the song of 'Auld Lang Syne,' but started it was and enthusiastically sung to the end:—only Mysie's voice trembled and at last became silent as they sang,—

> We twa hae paidl't i' the burn
> Frae morning sun till dine;
> But seas between us braid hae roared
> Since auld lang syne.

Her first New Year's thoughts had flown across the broad Atlantic with a sigh and a prayer for perverse Jim.

Much amusement was created when Rab Reyburn insisted, amid the general bustle of departure, upon making a speech of which the only words that could be heard above the uproarious laughter were to the effect that that was the first 'Hogmanay' he recollected of spending without getting drunk, and also that for once in his life he had 'heard a sang o' Rab Mossgiel's sung, withoot missin' the clink o' the whisky glasses.'

Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, senior, took their departure for Otterbank House amid ringing cheers, and not less hearty were the tokens of favour showered upon the homeward way of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, junior.

And now we also will bid them farewell.

Life is fair and bright for them once more. A new year has dawned alike upon their hearts and on the world. The storms have passed by and the sky is clear. It may be so only for a time, it is true, for storms will

come again, since sorrow is never very far away from the lot of earnest men and women; but surely we may predict for them a future happy in spite of storms, since love for God, love for their fellows, and their own tender and well-tried personal affection, have woven a triple thread of gold athwart the grey web of their lives.

GLOSSARY OF SCOTCH WORDS.

A', all.
Abe, be.
Aboon (or, abune), above.
Aboot, about.
Adae, either.
Ae, one; only.
Aff, off.
Aff-pittin', putting off.
Aff-putten, cast off.
Aiblins, perhaps.
Ain, own.
Aince (or, ance), once.
Airth, earth.
Amang, among.
Ane, one.
Anent, concerning.
Anither, another.
A'thing, all things; every thing.
Auld, old.
Ava', at all.
Awa', away.

BADE, staid.
Bairn, child.
Baith, both.
Bannet, bonnet.
Bauld, bold.
Bawbee, a half-penny.
Behauden, beholden.
Ben, in.
Ben-end, parlor or sitting-room; kitchen.
Bide, stay.
Biggin, building, house.
Binna, be not; is not.
Birr, to make a whirring noise.
Bluid, blood.
Bode, same as bade, staid.
Bonnie, or bonny, beautiful.
Bonnieness, cleverness.
Bothy, hut, cottage.
Brae, a hill-slope, acclivity.
Braw, fine.
Brawly, finely; well.
Braid, broad.
Bricht, bright.
Brither, brother.
Brocht, brought.
Brunt, burned.
Buik, book.
Buirdly, stout; broad-made.
Bund, bound.
Burn (or, burnie), rivulet.
But and ben, back room and sitting-room.
Byre, cow-stable; sheep-pen.

CAIRN, a mound of stones.
Canna, can not.
Canny, gentle; well-disposed.
Cauld, cold.
Ceevil, civil.
Certy, for certain, sure; indeed.
Chairge, charge.
Chap, tap; thrum.
Cheep, chirp; a word.
Chiel (or, chield,) young man.
Claes, clothes.
Claith, cloth.
Clash, talk; converse; gossip.
Clud, cloud.
Coont, count.
Coorse, course.
Crack, talk; gossip.
Cratur, creature.
Craw, crow.
Creepie, stool; hassock.
Crood, crowd.
Croon, crown.
Croose (or, crouse,) pert; bold.
Cutty, short; small in stature.

DAE, do.
Daffing, sporting.
Daft, foolish; mad.
Dauchter, daughter.
Daur, dare.
Daurna, dare not.
Dawtie, darling; one doated on.
Deave, deafen.
Dee, die.
Deed (or, deid), dead.
Denty, dainty.
Didna, did not.
Dinna, do not.
Disna, does not.
Div, do.
Dochter, daughter.
Donnert, stupid.
Doo, dove.
Dool, grief, trouble.
Doon, down.
Doot, doubt.
Douce, grave; serious.
Dour, grim.
Dowie, sad.
Dreich, slow; tedious.
Drookit, drenched; drowned.
Droon, drown.
Drucken, drunk.
Dumbfoondered, amazed.
Dune, done.
Dwine, dwindle.

EE (or, e'e), eye.
Een (or, e'en), eyes.
Eerie, timorous; afraid.
Efter, after.
Efternune, afternoon.
Embro, Edinboro'; Edinburgh.
Eneuch (or, eneugh), enough.
Ettle, intend; aim at; attempt.
Even doon, downright.

FAITHER, father.
Farl, cake.
Fash, trouble; annoy.
Fashious, helpless.
Faur, far.
Faut, fault.
Fecht, fight.

Feckless, worthless; feeble.
Fecklessness, carelessness.
Fell, keen or keenly.
Fend, provide.
Ferlie, wonder (contemptuously); a fancy.
Fesh, fetch.
Fit, foot.
Flichter, flutter.
Flooer, flower.
Flure, floor.
Flyte, scold.
Foondry, foundry.
Forebear (or, forbear), ancestress; ancestor.
Forbye, besides.
Fornent, opposite.
Forrit, forward.
Foucht, fought.
Frae, from.
Freend, friend.
Frem, strange.
Fricht, fright.
Fule, fool.
Fushionless, incompetent.

Gae, go.
Gaed, went.
Gaffer, direct.
Gait, way.
Gane, gone.
Gang, go.
Gar, make.
Gawn, going.
Gear, goods; property.
Genty, elegantly formed; neat; high-bred.
Gey, very; pretty.
Geyan, very.
Gie, give.
Gien, given.
Gif (or, gin), if.
Girn, grin; snarl at.
Glaiket, thoughtless; foolish.
Glisk, glimpse.
Gloaming, twilight.
Gomeril, fool; dolt; blockhead.
Goon, gown.
Gowan, wild daisy.
Grabbit, grabbed.
Grat, cried.
Grawn, grand.
Greet, cry.
Grue, shudder; shiver.
Grund, ground.
Gude (or, guid), good.
Gump, wade.

Hae, have.
Haen, had.
Haena, have not.
Hail (or, hale), whole.
Hairst, harvest.
Hame, home.
Hantle, a handful; much; many.
Hasna, has not.
Haud, hold.
Havena, have not.
Heid, head.
Helpit, helped.
Hing, hang.
Hinna, have not.
Hizzie, young woman; tom-boy.
Hoo, how.
Hoolet, owl; owlet.
Hooly, slowly.
Hooly! take leisure; stop!
Hoose, house.
Hopit, hoped.
Houp, hope.
Howdy-hole, closet.
Howin, hoeing.
Hubble, confusion.

Ilk or ilka, each; every.
Intae (and, intil), into.
Ither, other.

Jimpy, little; neat; slender.
Jist, just.

Kebbuck, a cheese-cake.
Keek, peep; look sharply.
Keepit, kept.
Ken, know.
Kenna, know not.
Kennin', knowing.
Kent (or, kenned), known, knew.
Kep, cape.
Kintry, country.
Kirn, harvest home; harvest feast.
Kittle, ticklish; nice; intricate.
Kye, cows.

Laird, lord; a land-proprietor.
Lairn, learn.
Lammie, little lamb.
Lane (his, her, its, etc.), alone.
Lang, long.
Lauch, laugh.
Lave, remainder; rest.
Leddy, lady.
Leal, loyal; faithful.
Lee, lie.
Len', loan.
Leeve, live.
Licht, light.
Lichtlie, sneer at; treat with contempt.
Lichtit, lighted.
Likit, liked.
Limmer, a wanton.
Lippen, trust.
Lookit, looked.
Lug, ear.
Lum, chimney.

Ma, my.
Mair, more.
Maist, most.
Maister, master.
Maitter, matter.
Mane, fuss; ado.
Maun, must.
Maunna, must not.
Micht, might.
Midden-dyke, garden wall; ditch.
Mirk, dark.
Mither, mother.
Mony, many.
Moosie, mouse.
Mou', mouth.
Muckle, much.
Muirland, moor.
Mune-licht, moon-light.

Na (or, nae), no, not.
Nae, none.
Naebody, nobody.
Naething, nothing.
Neebor, neighbor.
Needna, need not.
Neist, next.
Nicht, night.
Noo, now: at the noo, at present; at once.

Ocht, aught.
Ongauns, goings on; doings.
Ony, any.
Oo, yes.
'Ooman, woman.
Oor, our.
Oot (or, ooten), out; out of.
Oucht, ought.
Ower, over.
Oxter, arm-pit.

Paidl't, paddled.

Pat, pot.
Patrick (or, paitrick), partridge.
Peety, pity.
Pit, put.
Pleeshure, pleasure.
Pooer, power.
Poo'rless, powerless.
Prig, cheapen; dispute.
Prood, proud.
Puir, poor.
Putten, put.

QUATE, quiet.
Quean, servant-maid; young woman.

RAEL, real.
Reek, smoke.
Reem, run over.
Richt, right.
Rin, run.
Roond, round.
Roup, sale.
Rowan, the mountain ash.
Rowth, plenty.

SAE, so.
Sair, sore; very,
Saut, salt.
Scone, cake.
Scoor, scour.
Shoon, shoes.
Sic (or, siccan), such.
Sicht, sight.
Siller, silver.
Simmer, summer.
Sin, since; after.
Sinsyne, afterward.
Skelly, squint.
Skep, hive for bees.
Slippit, slipped.
Smeddum, spirit; mettle.
Snell, biting; severe; sharp.
Socht, sought.
Sodger, soldier.
Spate, flood.
Speer (or, spier), ask for; inquire.
Speerit, spirit.
Stanes, stones.
Steer, stare.
Stoop, a prop; a post fixed in the earth.
Stoory, dusty; stormy.
Stoppit, stopped.
Stour, dust.
Stracht (or, strecht), straight.
Stravage, wander or stray.
Stude (or, studer), stood.
Sune, soon.
Sutten, set.
Syne, after; ago.

TAE, to.
Tapsalteerie, topsy-turvy.
Tatties, potatoes.
Telt, told.
Tempit, tempted.
Thack, thatch.
Thae, those.
Thegither, together.
Thocht, thought.
Thole, bear; endure.
Thon, those.
Thowless, slack; lazy; heedless.
Thrapple, throat; windpipe.
Thraw (or, throw), twist; quarrel; be cross.
Thrawn, cross; perverse; quarrelsome.
Thrawnness, perversity.
Thraid, thread.
Till, to.
Toon, town.
Twa, two.
Twal', twelve.

UNKENT, unknown.
Unco, very, strange.
Unneeborly; unneighborly.
Uphaud, uphold.

VERRA, very.

WAD (or, wud), would.
Waddin', wedding.
Wae, sorrowful; sad.
Waggit, wagged.
Wantit, wanted.
Wark, work.
Warld, world.
Warst, worst.
Warstle, struggle.
Waur, worse.
Weans, babes; children.
Wechty, weighty.
Wee, little.
Weel, well.
Whae, who.
Whan, when.
Whatten, what; which one.
Whaur, where.
Wheen, a number; a good deal.
Wheesht, be calm, hush.
Whiles (or, whyles), sometimes.
Whing, cry; complain; fret.
Winna, will not.
Withhaud, withhold.
Workit, worked.
Wrang, wrong.
Wudna, would not.
Wull, will.
Wullint, willing.
Wunner, wonder.
Wush, wish.

YAMMER (or, yaumer), fret; scold.
Yestreen, yester evening.
Yett, gate.
Yirls, earls.
Yont, beyond.

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